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ABSTRACT

This issue of "Focus: Teaching English in Southeastern Ohio" contains articles about teaching Shakespeare, student summaries of a Shakespeare conference held at Ohio University-Zanesville in April 1976, and suggested projects for teaching poetry writing. It also contains lists of materials and articles related to the teaching of Shakespeare, and debate topics which clarify ideas in Shakespeare. Titles of articles are: "Report on the Zanesville Shakespeare Conference"; "Pluck Out the Heart of My Mystery: How to Bring Shakespeare to the Boondocks, and Other Places"; "Methods that Work with 'Julius Caesar'"; "The Arm'd Rhinoceros and Other Creatures: Shakespeare's Language and the Reluctant Reader"; "Classroom Presentations of Shakespeare"; "Getting Straight with Shakespeare's 'The Merchant of Venice'"; "Humanism as the Key to Shakespeare's Relevance"; and "Some Notes on Shakespearean Acting and Sundry Ramblings on the State of the American Theatre." (JM)

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TEACHING SHAKESPEARE

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EMPHASES IN FUTURE ISSUES:

Fall: Censorship and Curriculum: Who Says So? Deadline, August 1.
Winter: Fiction for Adolescents, Deadline for submission, December 1.
Spring: Creative Writing in the Elementary and Middle School, Deadline for submission, April 1, 1977.

SOCTE IS AN AFFILIATE OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH
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Report on the Zanesville Shakespeare Conference

by

Marye Keslar

Approximately one hundred Ohio University-Zanesville students, area residents, and teachers from Central and Southeastern Ohio celebrated the birthday of William Shakespeare when they met for a Shakespeare Conference at Elson Hall, Ohio University-Zanesville, Friday and Saturday, April 23-24, 1976.

Shakespeare, considered by scholars to be the greatest dramatist in the English language, was born April 23, 1564, in Stratford-upon-Avon, England. Appropriately, participants at the conference studied Shakespeare's life and times and the three plays which eighty-seven members of the group will see in production when they visit the Stratford, Ontario, Shakespeare Festival, June 10-13.

Specialists who led the Friday discussions and Saturday symposium on teaching Shakespeare in the classroom were Samuel R. Crowl, James E. Davis, Ernest H. Johansson, and Edward A. Quattrocki, Professors in the English Language and Literature Department, Ohio University-Athens. Joy Miller, English teacher, Circleville Junior High School, and Fritz Enstrom, Chairman of the English Department, Caldwell High School, also participated in the symposium.

Following the Friday evening birthday dinner in Herrold Hall, the conference members attended a showing of the Peter Hall Production, A Midsummer Night's Dream, in the Elson Hall Auditorium.

Guest speaker for the Saturday luncheon was William Glover, Associate Professor, School of Theater, Ohio University-Athens, who was sponsored by the Cultural Committee of Ohio University-Zanesville. Professor Glover has had the unique experience of performing at Stratford, England;

Stratford, Connecticut, and Stratford, Canada. The subject of his talk was The Three Stratfords. George L. Ware, Assistant Professor of English, Ohio University-Zanesville, presided at both the dinner and the luncheon.

OUZ students who served as recorder-reactors for the meetings were Tim Arnold, Linda Schade, New Concord; Laurie Reboulet, Alice Kieffer, Cambridge; Cammie Erlandson, Byesville; Verna Donelson, Adamsville; Kathy Goins, Malta; Linda Printz, Crooksville; Sharon Ross, Lore City; and Kristy Browning, Ronald Hicks, Debbie Nash, Martha Timberman, Pamela Wagner, Bobbi Young, and Teresa Young, Zanesville.

Sponsors of the Shakespeare Conference were the Southeastern Ohio Council of Teachers of English, the English Association of Ohio, and Ohio University. Marye Keslar, Assistant Professor of English, Ohio University-Zanesville, and President of the Southeastern Ohio Council of Teachers of English, was Coordinator for the Shakespeare Conference and is Director of the Stratford Tour.

At the business meeting it was reported that SOCTE membership had reached 225. New officers elected were: President, June Berkley, Beverly; Vice President, Martha Cottrill, Chillicothe; Secretary, Mary K. Frost, Beverly; and Treasurer, Luther W. Tracy, Rio Grande.

SOCTE has voted a $100.00 donation to the F. Anthony DeJovine Memorial Scholarship donation in memory of Tony. Checks should be made out to The Ohio University Fund but earmarked for this special purpose. Those who know Tony's students and his concern for them, know how appropriate it is to have such a student scholarship fund in his memory.

Ohio University-Zanesville

'Pluck out the heart of my mystery'

How to Bring Shakespeare to the Boondocks, and Other Places

by

James E. Davis

My original title for this article was "Shakespeare in the Boondocks." That title was stolen from a title John Simmons of Florida State University used for an article describing the teaching of Shakespeare in some of the high schools in Northern Florida. In that article, Simmons makes some suggestions on how Shakespeare might be approached in schools in rural areas of America. I thought his title was a good attention-getter and that it might also accurately describe what I am attempting to do here--to pull together some of the promising and unusual approaches to Shakespeare in somewhat unlikely settings so that we English and Language Arts teachers of Southeastern Ohio might get some idea of things to try in our own classrooms.

As I began exploring in earnest, however, I found that not a great many of these promising practices had actually been written up or that if they had I was looking in the wrong places. Maybe not many were even being done at all. Some I did read were so glowing in their success halo that I had trouble believing them. Along with this search of books and journals, I began asking a few randomly and not-so-randomly selected people questions like "If you could do one thing only as a teacher of Shakespeare, what would it be?" Or "What is the most important thing for a teacher to keep in mind in getting ready to teach Shakespeare?" Or "What is the best thing you do in teaching a Shakespearean play?" Or "How would you teach Shakespeare in the boondocks?" And other such Barbara Walterish types of questions. Finally one of my colleagues, Elma MacKenzie, a fine teacher of Shakespeare, gave me

both the answer that my inane questions deserved and a better title for this article. When I asked Elma a few of these questions, she replied, "What? Would you pluck out the heart of my mystery? And teaching Shakespeare is a mystery." That's exactly what I had been trying to do.

That phrase "pluck out the heart of my mystery" comes from Act III, Scene 2 of Hamlet. You may remember that is the scene with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern where some players enter with recorders. Hamlet speaks:

> Ham. O, the recorders! Let me see one. To withdraw with you--why do you go about to recover the wind of me as if you would drive me into a toil?
> Guil. O my lord, if my duty be too bold, my love is too unmannerly.
> Ham. I do not well understand that. Will you play upon this pipe?
> Guil. My lord, I cannot.
> Ham. I pray you.
> Guil. Believe me, I cannot.
> Ham. I do beseech you.
> Guil. I know no touch of it, my lord.
> Ham. It is as easy as lying. Govern these vantages with your fingers and thumbs, give it breath with your mouth, and it will discourse most eloquent music. Look you, these are the stops.
> Guil. But these I cannot command to any utterance of harmony. I have not the skill.
> Ham. Why, look you now, how unworthy a thing you make of me! You would play upon me; you would seem to know my stops; you would pluck out the heart of my mystery; you would sound me from my lowest note to the top of my compass; and there is much music, excellent voice, in this little organ, yet cannot you make it speak. . . .

Yes, I would pluck out the heart of the mystery of teaching Shakespeare in the boondocks, and where is that? It s everywhere! Rural North Florida, for instance, which John Simmons tells about in his article (English Journal, October, 1968, 972-976). He tells of sitting in on a tenth-grade English class where a student teacher was teaching Julius Caesar, or "agonizing her way through," as John puts it. The story is all too familiar--a bright, talented well-prepared teacher, still unable to get very far in her teaching of Shakespeare. Simmons believes that the main problem is what he calls "the utter lack of context." The majority of the families of the students in the

area Simmons writes about have little interest in the culture that Shakespeare represents, so that if motivation is to come, it must come from somewhere else. Television? Films? Simmons thinks not. Live productions? In the boondocks there aren't many. So the teacher must build that context. And what activities might build such a context in a rural school environment like North Florida or Southeastern Ohio? Simmons proposes two phases which he labels readiness and reinforcement.

In the readiness phase such things as a preliminary study of Early Modern English with attention to certain "processes of translation of syntactic and lexical irregularities" might help. Introduction to matters relating to the reading of the dramatic form of literature, with emphasis on visualization might also help. He advises using all of the audio-visual materials at hand, including a model or diagram of the Shakespearean theater and stage which is thoroughly described and then kept in full view of the students during their reading of the play. A final readiness activity involves discussing the plays in the students' own language, thus enabeling the students to make imaginative entry. Before actually reading Julius Caesar, for example, the teacher might ask the students to imagine that they had gone to school and grown up with a man, and he had grown very powerful and important while they had not. If, as time went on and your jealously increased, you began to feel more and more that he was getting drunk with power, what steps might you take? Through questions such as these the teacher can characterize natures of Cassius, Brutus, Anthony and other major characters which the students will need to analyze during the reading of the play. And by helping students to identify, before reading, human motivations, fears, interrelationships, etc., the way can be paved for easier handling of these things when they appear in the play. "If the students can articulate their feelings about several aspects of human experience in their own

language, it should seem to follow that they could more easily identify and consider these same matters in print." (79)

How about the reinforcement phase? Simmons suggests six: 1) Consistent attention to difficult, archaic, and unusual words, 2) Oral readings should be prepared whenever possible, 3) Frequent interruptions should be made during the oral readings, 4) Summary statements of long and important speeches should be assigned, 5) Use tapes, records, videotapes, films, filmstrips, etc., whenever possible, and 6) Progressive consideration of acts and scenes can be used. At the end of each act or scene such questions as these might be asked: What has happened? Whom has this action affected and how? What will happen next? In answering these questions the student sees his hypothesis change and develop as he gains more information and insight--a conscious participation in the understanding process. Perhaps Simmons reveals part of the heart of the mystery of teaching Shakespeare in the boondocks.

So much for the boondocks of Florida. How about Kirkwood, Missouri and "Romeo and Juliet for the Disadvantaged"? (English Journal, February 1970, 273-276). In the high school there Jeanette Hanke decided to move the classroom seats from the regular rows she had been using and to divide her class into groups for the acting of the play. This seems a fairly obvious thing to do; for Jeanette the motivation or impetus for "plucking out the heart of the mystery" came after she attended the NCTE Spring Institute in St. Louis in 1969, where she heard such speakers as Geoffrey Summerfield, Nancy Martin, and Benjamin DeMott. On her first day back at school after attending the Institute, she divided her first hour class into groups of five to six members each. It did take some time for the excitement of being permitted to move around freely to wear off, but once this had subsided the assignment was explained to the students and accepted with no great difficulty. The class had already studied West Side Story and seen Zefferelli's film version of Romeo

and Juliet so that they knew the story and had fairly clear conceptions of settings and costumes. The assignment then was to perform three acts of the play for the rest of the class. Acts I and V would be done by all three groups. One group would also do Act II, one Act III, and the third Act IV. The entire production was to be up to the students. They could read Shakespeare's words directly from their books, change or cut speeches, use their own words to express Shakespeare's ideas, etc. One essay was required on how they were going to act out their roles in the performance.

The teacher's expectations were not very high, but she was amazingly surprised. Students who had been very poorly motivated, even haters of Shakespeare, began to work in a way that made the time pass very fast. They even came to school early to read, to plan, and to rehearse. Many even stayed after periods had officially ended to finish work they were doing. The class was a low track English 12 at 8:45 a.m. Until this drama project started the attendance had not been good. Jeanette describes it vividly:

> I knew that the missing students had either overslept, had a hangover, had been in a fight, had had to appear in court for one reason or another, were suffering from "morning sickness," just didn't want to come, or were truant for the day--all valid reasons for their nonappearance in first hour English. (273)

After the beginning of play rehearsals the change in the students was miraculous. Attendance, for example, was almost perfect. When they had trouble with the language, they used glossaries and dictionaries, discussed meanings in groups, and sometimes consulted the teacher. And although the performances were not monumental works of art, they were seriously done, but with a good bit of hamming. The students took criticism from one another rather well, even though an occasional fight did break out. Perhaps everyone does want to act Shakespeare; at least in Kirkwood, Missouri, the indications are that acting provides part of the solution to the mystery of bringing Shakespeare to the boondocks.

Okay, so Shakespeare could come to the Panhandle of Florida schools and even Kirkwood, Missouri, but what about a place like a black inner-city school in Washington, D.C.? Can Shakespeare be brought there too? Well Lauren Cohen thinks so, and she gives a persuasive testimonial to that effect in an article called "Romeo and Juliet: Living Is Being Relevant" (English Journal, December 1970, 1263-1265+1269). Apparently Romeo and Juliet is one of the most popular of plays among high school students. Perhaps this is related in no small measure to the popularity of Zefferelli's film. Cohen was teaching tenth graders in an all black inner-city school, with all of the students reading below grade level, and was somewhat at a loss about how to make Shakespeare come alive to them. She found an old set of Romeo and Juliet and decided that that might be as good a play as any to start with, but even then she waited a few days before she worked up the courage to bring the books to the class. When she finally started, she passed out the books but instructed the students not to open them. Instead, for the first day they became acquainted with the Montagues and the Capulets, and who were they? Two large families--that was certainly not something foreign to these students. All the relatives lived together. They understood that.

The next day the teacher began reading the Prologue, following very thorough rehearsal. After a short time the students began to show their impatience in various ways. Upon inquiry, the teacher found out that some of the brighter students wanted to read themselves, so she began calling on them. They understood street fights, family quarrels, and obscene gestures very well. Neither did they have trouble relating to and reading about a new or a first love. But the thing that they seemed to relate to most was parental disapproval. The teacher didn't have to add much; Shakespeare himself had done most of the work of establishing relevance hundreds of years ago. Cohen is probably right when she says:

> We academicians tend to confuse and frustrate students with long, drawn-out lessons and discussions of "universality." There is time enough for that later in the educational process. It is enough for now that my tenth-grade English classes thought Juliet was quite a "chick," and Romeo seemed like an "o.k. dude" even though he was white (1264).

Even some of the poorest readers began to want to read, and many of these poorer readers began to read ahead enough that they knew which parts they could do well.

By the time the class got to Act II some of them requested that the seats be pushed back so that the play could be staged in the classroom. Parts were assigned with understudies to cover absentees. The class selected a director for each scene to assist the characters in preparing their roles. If the scene didn't suit the director, he would have it done over, with the teacher's permission. Many formerly recalcitrant boys fought to be Romeo or Tybalt, and some of the shyest girls wanted to do Juliet's part, at least once. The desire to perform and the resultant preparation in advance did wonders for even the tenth-grade students reading at a sixth-grade level. They staged the tomb scene in the auditorium. For evaluation students could either assume the role of a reporter on a modern city newspaper and write a modern account of the series of deaths, murders, and suicides among these two families, or they could choose to update a scene in the play. The idea was to put it into their own language while still retaining the general meaning of the original. When the articles were read and the performance done, Cohen describes the results in this way: "The Juliets were pregnant, the Romeos, confused and afraid, but deeply in love. The Romeos were usually misunderstood by the Capulets--either his hairdo, his friends, his clothes, or his color 'turned them off'." (1265)

Fortunately Zefferelli's film was playing downtown at the end of the unit, and the class was able to go see it. They paid their own way, and they responded fully, not missing a single moment to roar their approval or dis-

approval, not unlike the "pit" of Shakespeare's day. Many of them even cried at the end, indicating that the bard had really come alive for them, thus solving another part of the Shakespeare-teaching mystery.

Inner-city D.C. is a far cry from what most of us think of the boondocks, but Greensboro, North Carolina, may be a little closer to authentically boondocks territory. There J. Gordon Greene motivates his students to study Shakespeare through a creative notebook approach, described in his April, 1972 English Journal article (pp. 504-507). What is most creative here is the manner in which the student "builds" the notebook. As the student reads each scene and act of a Shakespearian play, he is asked to condense the main action of the scene into one sentence. This he enters in his notebook. Obviously, by the time he finishes this process he has his own home-made scene-by-scene synopsis of the action. A very important feature of this sentence writing, however, is that the summaries can be written in any one of several different styles--plain, unadorned modern diction, the style of the King James version of the Bible, or current teenage jargon. Greene cites examples of each style from the first two scenes of Macbeth:

PLAIN

Act I, Scene 1. Three witches agree to meet Macbeth upon the heath after the war.
Act I, Scene 2. A sergeant comes from the battlefield to tell Duncan that Macbeth has won the war, and then Duncan tells the sergeant to go and find Macbeth and tell him that he is the new thane of Cawdor. (505)

KING JAMES STYLE

Act I, Scene 1. And it came to pass in a certain desert place in the country of Scotland, while there were thunderings and lightenings, that there chanced to meet three witches who spake together, agreeing to meet again when some dire deed had fallen.
Act I, Scene 2. Now Duncan, King of Scotland, made Macbeth the thane of Cawdor, for he had led his army against the army of the Norwegians and had delivered them unto his hand. (505-6)

MODERN TEENAGE JARGON

Student 1

Act 1, Scene 1. Three skags make the noisy cactus scene and jive to meet Macbeth in the space.

Act I, Scene 2. Big Daddy will give the greets to Macbeth for walking over the Norwegians and make him a big cat, thane of Cawdor.

Student 2

Act I, Scene 1. Man, like the old once upon a time bit and we're off; there were these three swinging chicks known as "The Casuals" who decide to have another session with the "Cool Stud"; thus ending the jam, they fade.

Act I, Scene 2. Like now we takes it with the "Old Man" who is meditating with "The Rebounds" when a leaking cat known to all as "Sarge" scenes and spills the ballad about the Cool Stud and his sidekick and their cool deeds for the Old Man, putting the candy on the Cool Stud, valor's favorite. (506)

Greene maintains that to be able to reduce something to its essence one must first know the substance of the matter and that therefore, this sentence summary approach is very useful in helping the student to get his facts straight. He also believes that it is difficult to change the style of a passage if you don't understand the original rather well; thus he sees a creative validity beyond mere explication of plot and action. The vital thing is the student goes beyond mere recording and reaction to active participation.

Active, creative participation could be the very heart of the mystery, especially for the somewhat reluctant reader, and Shakespeare is surely for him too. After all it was not just the accelerated who showed up with their penny at the Globe, where they sometimes stood in line for hours and then stood in the pit. Yes, Shakespeare had something to say to those groundlings and he has something to say to the groundlings in our classrooms today, if we are patient and make the most of participation and involvement. In the following statement Maynard Mack suggests two reasons why teachers fail to make (allow) Shakespeare come alive to students: "On the one hand, the teacher is a bardolater and holds the play aloft for distant veneration as if it were a thing too refined for human nature's daily food. I had a teacher

like this myself. Whenever we came to any of the great speeches in the play, he would lean back in his chair, close his eyes, and murmur, in a voice you could pour on a waffle, 'Ah, the magic of it, the magic!' That same magic took me a whole year to get over and almost sent me into chemical engineering." (In Gordon and Noyes. Essays on the Teaching of English, Appleton, 1960, 323.)

How are we going to keep from sending future Maynard Macks into chemical engineering? The most important thing is that we remember that at the heart or at least near to the heart of the mystery is the importance of playing on our own individual strengths. And although I can't suggest a perfect method, I can suggest the perfect goal--to get our students to respond to the excitement and beauty of Shakespeare's works as if he were alive today, for indeed he is in his works. The world that we can open up to them is not only one of logic and reason, of profound thoughts, but it is also very much a world of grandeur, magic, and most certainly passion. That is about as close as I can come to plucking out the heart of the mystery of bringing Shakespeare to the Boondocks.

Ohio University, Athens

Methods that Work with JULIUS CAESAR

by

Joy Miller

"YUCK! Shakespeare! Do we have to study HIM???" How often have our well-thought-out unit plans for what we feel will certainly be a thrilling introduction to the life and times of William Shakespeare been abruptly met with a totally negative response such as this? I know mine have. But, I have learned to rise to the occasion, not letting my initial enthusiasm be dampened, and to quickly dispel my students' misgivings about this Englishman of the 1500's and his important place in their study of literature.

As a General English teacher on the 9th grade level (as opposed to College Prep), my goal is to expose my students to Shakespeare and the Elizabethan era from whence he came. Since this is, for most, a first-time encounter, I find it a most challenging and exciting task that stands before me. It is stated in the school curriculum that all 9th grade (Freshman) students shall study Julius Caesar, and the play does appear in our 9th grade literature text, Approaches to Literature, as an example of tragedy, I tell my students, "You can't hate something you know nothing of; at least give 'Willie' a chance. Then you can hate him--after you've read him." Of course, my hope "springs eternal" that after our study, this unfounded and somewhat ignorant dislike will simply disappear. To accomplish this, it has been necessary for me to gather sufficient ammunition to adequately execute my game plan.

I find myself faced with the question: "How does one introduce Shakespeare in an appealing manner and then go about sustaining that appeal?" First, I feel it is imperative that I prove the worth of Shakespeare, remem-

bering that what I now deem worthy of study often did not seem so to me at the age of fifteen. With this in mind, certain student rights are established in my class at the outset of the school year; one being that the student, so long as he is respectful, always may ask why we are doing a certain thing or what the purpose of studying a particular subject is. This practice holds true for our Shakespearean study, and I am ever ready to answer with sincerity any question, should it arise, concerning the "why" of Shakespearean study. I have found that, once appealed to with this kind of logic, students are far more receptive to new (and old!) ideas. Because, as I mentioned earlier, it is their study of literature, they must be shown that it does, indeed, have merit and relevancy for them.

To further illustrate this relevancy, I let Shakespeare take his place in the course of theatre history. (My unit on "Shakespeare" lies within a larger area of study--approximately six weeks--labeled simply "drama"). We begin with the Greeks, who started it all, and talk of amphitheatres, the first actor, Thespus, and Choregus, an early Greek dancer whose name today gives us the word "Choreography", among other things. After two or three days spent on learning how and where it all began, we move through time to the Elizabethan period and William Shakespeare. Then, from this point in "dramatical" time, we jump way ahead to radio plays of the 1940's and '50's and finally to the current Broadway stage. We discuss the technical aspects, what goes on "behind the scenes" and all of the jobs that need to be done when producing a Broadway show by the individuals you never hear about. Yet, they are the ones, I explain, that make the show or "break" it.

I try to make the students' experience with Shakespeare as "painless" as possible, and they appreciate it. Sometime during the week before the actual reading of the play, we view a film. There are several that can be obtained, but the one I like to use is, Julius Caesar--The Rise of the Roman

Empire (22 min., color). This movie shows how Caesar entered politics, became governor of Gaul, and contributed to the Roman empire. It gives the student a clearer visual picture of the time period and enhances this particular study by showing a more complete overview of the history of Rome during those days. Thus, the class is better prepared for the play. Incidentally, this also helps many gain greater distinction between the two figures, Julius Caesar, the famed Roman emperor, and William Shakespeare, the man who, centuries later, wrote a play about him. I rely heavily on our school's audio/visual resources to supply me with other background materials concerning the Shakespearean era. The students view various film strips: one shows scene highlights from the movie version of Julius Caesar; one gives an historical sketch of the famous playwright; and another explains the structure of the Globe Theatre by showing step by step how one class built a replica of it. There is another movie that is available entitled, Julius Caesar: Act III, Scene II (20 min., color). It captures the forum scene which follows the assassination of Caesar.

The largest bulletin board in my classroom, during this time, becomes a Shakespearean Showcase. I never hesitate to add as many of my own personal touches and experiences as I can. I find that the students perk up as I unfold tales of the trip I took a few years ago to Stratford, Connecticut. They become less far removed from our subject of study as I tell of actually roaming through America's Shakespearean city. The large poster/portrait of Shakespeare in the center of the bulletin board takes on new and more relevant meaning for them when they learn that I obtained it myself, while visiting there. The postcards showing scenes of Julius Caesar become more than "just postcards" when they know I actually viewed those very scenes in the play a few years back and brought them home to share with them. And the slides taken inside the costume shop on the grounds at Stratford, showing life-sized

mannequins modeling costumes one would have seen back in Shakespeare's day are equally appreciated. Through my own experiences, I can bring Shakespeare and his era a bit closer to these students today. And I find he does come alive for them.

We spend approximately one week on the play, itself. But we don't actually "read" it. I have found that by using the Marlowe Society's Complete and Uncut Version of Julius Caesar on London Records to accompany the printed matter found in their textbook, the results are far more beneficial. We deal with the play more efficiently and effectively, and student interest remains high. The experienced actors and actresses on these records who portray Caesar, Anthony, the conspirators, and the two wives make the words in the text come alive; and the sound effects of the war, street noises, and the throngs of Roman citizens tend to further enhance the play presentation. This, of course, is the overall effect I intend to promote! I have found that a successful teaching experience is often aided greatly by appealing to as many of the five senses as is possible. And, in combining the textbook version of Julius Caesar with the recording of the play, the senses of sight and hearing are appealed to.

After Julius Caesar has been examined, my students are given the opportunity to learn of other Shakespearean plays, as time permits. Through additional films, filmstrips, tape recordings and the like, this is made possible. As referred to earlier, this Shakespeare study is included in an entire drama unit, and a six weeks, end-of-year project involving some aspect of drama, is required of each student. Many choose to do these oral presentations on some phase of Shakespeare or the Elizabethan era. Some of the girls in my classes, who also enjoy sewing, choose to make sample costumes from the period--either a large one that they model for the class, or several smaller versions that they put on doll-size figures. Some have grouped together with two or three

of their friends and constructed salt, flour, and water models of the Globe. Some have researched the music of Shakespeare's time. And still others have preferred to memorize and deliver to their classmates one of the major speeches in the play.

Time permitting, I often tie in a creative writing assignment on one day of our study by bringing in music of the period, (I have the record series: Music of Shakespeare's Time) allowing time for the students to explore the imagery through the music and perhaps compose a poem or story using these tunes as the basis for the assignment.

As far as testing over the Shakespeare unit, besides smaller quizzes where students identify characters in the play and prove their knowledge about its author, I ask each student to answer an in-class essay question which involves re-telling the story of the play in his or her own words. I have also tried having each student pick a scene of interest and attempt to re-write that scene in modern-day lingo. This project has proved interesting and highly amusing as some of the more imaginative students have put their particular scene choice into Black "jive talk", "Hippie talk", and the like.

I have been somewhat pressured at times by others on our English faculty to change the required Shakespearean selection: Some have shown interest in Hamlet, and others Romeo and Juliet, or even The Merchant of Venice as a possible substitute for the current choice. But I have "held out" for Julius Caesar. Romeo and Juliet is too "sweet" for my ninth grade boys who would think the touching love scenes only "mush". The Merchant of Venice and Hamlet contain plotlines that are perhaps too complicated. Why not wait on these for a year or two when both teacher and student can do them more justice on the high school level? Besides, why not have a little fun with this "first-time" experience? Julius Caesar suits me just fine, with its factual, historical value, its moral message, and its interesting and relatively easy-to-follow

plotline. I can not say enough for the stabbing scene!--When the actor on our record who plays Caesar goes "Ahhhhh..." after being knifed, my students' interest hits an all-time high.

It seems to me, when we are combining what can be rightly labeled "heavy, old literature" with the somewhat immature minds of our modern young people at our junior high schools, we must bend a little. If this kind of gore lends interest to this age group's total appreciation of the play experience, I say let this interest that has happened SOAR. Bring the play to a level all can appreciate at their young ages. After all, the goal is to <u>expose</u> them to William Shakespeare and his plays. Why not do everything we can to make this exposure an interesting and pleasurable experience for them; one that <u>they</u> will feel is "neat", <u>you</u> will feel is beneficial--and <u>all</u> will feel is a success!

Circleville Junior High

The Arm'd Rhinoceros and other Creatures: Shakespeare's Language and The Reluctant Reader

by

Samuel Crowl

I am aware that most young readers of Shakespeare are faced with monumental problems of working their way into his language and yet we realize that his highly charged imagistic and metaphorical poetry is one of his great gifts to his audience and reader. I think it is possible, however, for young readers to become alive to that language, especially if we give them some help in what to look for. I can imagine a young class working successfully with Macbeth, for example, by being asked to read the play simply looking for all the animals Shakespeare evokes in the poetry. I would ask each student to come to class with a list of ten animals mentioned in the text and to write those lists on the board. It will soon become apparent that those lists will include: bats, scorpions, beetles, crows, bears, horses, dogs, lizards, rhinoceroses, owls, falcons, toads, snakes, wolves, sharks, tigers, greyhounds, dragons, etc. None of these words, by themselves, are strangers to our students and from them they may begin to see how the specific imagery within the poetry of the play helps to create the kind of world Macbeth has created in Scotland (dark, vicious, terrifying, and monstrous) and the kind of man Macbeth, himself, has become. These very familiar animals help to create the texture of Macbeth's anxiety and insecurity born by his crime and also his fierce (animal-like) insistence that once having murdered, his only choice is to murder again and again until everyone in his country feels threatened, feels that they too may be hunted down and killed, however helpless and innocent they may be (Lady MacDuff and her children are excellent examples here). By beginning to focus on why Shakespeare puts all these

animals into his play and, particularly, into Macbeth's and the witches's poetry, the class can be led to a consideration of the moment when Macbeth tries to tell Lady Macbeth that he has changed his mind about killing Duncan: (my underlinings)

Lady Macbeth: Would'st thou have that
Which thou esteem'st the ornament of life,
And live a coward in thine own esteem,
Letting "I dare not" wait upon "I would,"
Like the poor <u>cat</u> i' th' adage?

Macbeth: Pr'ythee, peace.
I dare do all that may become a <u>man</u>;
Who dares do more, is none.

Lady Macbeth: What <u>beast</u> was't then,
That made you break this enterprize to me?
When you durst do it, then you were a <u>man</u>....(1.7.41-51)

Lady Macbeth skillfully dangles that domestic cat (who wants the fish in the stream but doesn't want to get its paws wet) in front of her husband who has just put the case properly: men are not animals, they have the capacity of reason and thus the ability to recognize that the human community has the opportunity to organize itself in ways less savage and more humane than beasts in the animal world. She manages to convince him that men are only men when they become beasts, when they go after what their appetites (passions) desire without regard for their victims. By mocking his manhood through calling him a poor cat she moves him towards the murder of Duncan and the general blood bath which follows in its wake. I realize that some of what I'm trying to get at here may seem a bit sophisticated for the average high school sophomore, but I think almost any student could be brought to a closer awareness of the power of Shakespeare's poetry by starting with simply making lists of some of the specific details, in this case animals, Shakespeare uses to create that poetry. We can then see the context in which that poetry is expressed, the ways in which he creates characters whose moral conflicts we recognize to be universal. The surface of the play is not something we have to wade through

simply to get to the "hidden meaning" underneath but is often the very essence of our pleasure in Shakespeare. Macbeth's character, I would argue, is inseparable from those animals which begin to fill his thoughts as he struggles with the knowledge of his crime.

On the other hand, it is often true that the poetry may seem too familiar to the student (I'm thinking of Hamlet's "To be or not to be" soliloquy here) so that they regard it, perhaps in league with Holden Caulfield, as "phoney." They regard Shakespeare's language as a cultural heritage only the supersophisticated really enjoy, a language which may embarrass them because it seems too elevated to carry meaning in a world where words may be suspect. One way of hurdling this very real obstacle might be to have the students chant such familiar soliloquies, or shout them, or say them in unison in a whisper, or do all three. We want them to laugh, both at themselves and the text, in such experiments. We want to break the mood that such moments in the plays are absolutely sacred and are to be treated only in awed respect, for nothing could be more deadly and surely will be self-defeating when one tries to move the class into a discussion of the central issues or conflicts dramatized in the play. Mocking the language, playing with it, simply listening to its sounds and rhythms--even when those rhythms are purposely destroyed through chanting or shouting or whispering--may prove a way of bringing the students closer to the poetry's living textures than treating their resistance to its power and beauty as sacrilege. Shakespeare, as we have been constantly reminded, wrote for the theater not for the study; his world was a "playhouse", and we do him a disservice if we don't realize that he can be played with, that he is good enough to take chances with if we feel those chances may be healthy ways of bringing our students out from their understandable cultural inhibitions about approaching a "classic."

I also believe that we have probably over-reacted to the ancient practice

of memorization and have banished it from our classrooms because it was associated with a more Victorian, formal and rigid way of teaching Shakespeare, or any other poet for that matter. Let me be candid. I do not think any teacher should require his or her students to memorize lines from the plays if he or she has not mastered some of the text. Nothing impressed me more as a student than when a teacher managed to recite a few lines from memory: I knew, as I often did not know in other classrooms, that that teacher loved what was being presented enough to capture it up from the page and into the mind. The simple act of letting those lines flow out taught me, in my teens, more about respect for the work than all the lectures on its moral values, its symbols, or its character motivations. Memorization is not for everyone, especially if they are asked to recite in front of the class, but I would give each student an opportunity to either recite a memorized passage in front of a class or to reproduce such a passage on a test in exchange for eliminating some other part of the test. I would also encourage groups of students to get together to memorize and present brief exchanges from the plays; the witches' opening lines in Macbeth are a natural here, so are any number of Puck's speeches from A Midsummer Night's Dream, as are any of the heated interchanges in Romeo and Juliet. The first lines I ever voluntarily memorized, at the age of fifteen, contained Capulet's blistering attack on Juliet after he discovers her refusal to marry Paris. It must somehow have been liberating for a young man to act the part of an enraged parent; the lines are not difficult and their headlong rush of invective still catch me up in the old man's anger. I realize that few students will be attracted to the "sweet" passages, but those which display passion, anger, or a swaggering bravado may appeal as much for the emotions they release in the student as for the sentiments or ideas they express. It may be that some of your students will not be interested, or perhaps capable, of memorizing continuous passages of ten lines or more. In their case I would

recommend memorizing several single lines from various moments in the text, allowing them, of course, to select those lines which capture an emotion they respond to, or simply appeal to their ear. Once those lines are in our heads they are likely to stay there; my guess is that if you stopped at this moment and recalled almost any Shakespeare play you read in college or have not taught in some time that you will be able to conjure up a line or two from it almost automatically. If you discover you can't, I banish you immediately to a recording of Cole Porter's Kiss Me, Kate and its frolicking lyric, "Brush Up Your Shakespeare"!

Another device which, I believe, brings us closer to Shakespeare's language and which may be effective only with your advanced students is to ask each student, after you have finished discussing most of the play, to come to class prepared to read a passage or an exchange of no more than ten lines which they believe crystalizes what the play is about for them. This asks them to find the language they would point to when asked to find a single moment in the text which summarizes or best depicts the essence of the play. This passage is likely to be about a particular character, a Macbeth or Romeo or Brutus or Hamlet and may serve to capture the essence of that character for the student; but the passage could as easily be about the play's atmosphere (the storm on the eve of Caesar's assassination, the witches's chant of "Fair is foul, and Foul is fair,") or about a particular theme they perceived to be at the heart of the play and which they felt was dramatically revealed through the poetry at a certain moment. If the class has been miraculously alert and lively you may find that this device will illustrate, as no other will, the protean nature of the play under discussion as student after student comes up with a different moment for comment. It has just struck me that it probably would be wise to ask them to find several such moments so that you did not face a reversal of what I just predicted.

Your best student volunteers his or her passage, you beam as it is read and explained, and then you turn to the next student and the next and the next only to be met with the mumble "Gee, Julie picked the passage I liked best too, and she said just what I was gonna say about it!"

A few final observations about some teaching experiences I have had which don't relate directly to Shakespeare's language but are related to reading. I have taught, for several years, a course in Shakespeare on Film. It has been, for a variety of reasons, both a great pleasure for me and a real learning experience. I realize that many high schools, with all the recent emphasis on visual aids and extra-textual materials, may have the funds for you to rent and show one of the many interesting films which have been based on Shakespeare's plays. I would encourage you to do so, for even if the film is not a success for all your students, it will excite many to a greater appreciation for the play once they have seen it moving on the screen. Clearly Franco Zeffirelli's Romeo and Juliet and Roman Polanski's Macbeth (both available in 16 mm) are those films which will find a natural audience among the young, as will Peter Hall's marvelous version of A Midsummer Night's Dream. What I have discovered in teaching these films to university students is that many students are much more adept at reading visual images than they are in reading verbal ones. My students often see things they don't hear or absorb off the page. I find that students write very exciting papers about relating a series of visual moments in these films in a telling chain of discovery which are far more sophisticated and intelligent than if they were simply asked to write a paper on images within the poetry. They are very alert in seeing how many of these filmmakers capture the spirit of Shakespeare's imagery without simply imitating it on an unimaginative basis. I think you might find similar experiences with your own students and so I'm suggesting that if you are fortunate enough to be able to share some of these films with your students that you allow them a chance to

write about them, to share with you their perceptions of how the films attempt to capture the Shakespearean language in visual images. This brings me somewhat full circle, back to Shakespeare's speaking pictures; the vivid, specific, images (those animals in Macbeth with which I began) which are the concrete means through which he creates the characters, landscapes, and penetrating insights into human nature and society we attempt to share with our students. I hope that some of my remarks and observations will be helpful in getting your class to open its "mind's eye" and to "spy into" the palpable wonders of Shakespeare's language.

Ohio University, Athens

Classroom Presentations of Shakespeare

by

Edward Quattrocki

The Shakespeare conference at the Zanesville campus of Ohio University on April 23-24 reassured me that the teaching of Shakespeare goes on in many Southeastern Ohio high schools with dedication, vigor and imagination. Hearing the various ideas about method and meeting the many different personalities who use those methods reminded me that the excellent teacher is not a stereotype. Shakespeare, like any other subject, can be taught at all education levels in a variety of ways. If we know our own strengths as teachers we can find those methods that best suit our personalities, capabilities and style.

In what follows I explain two kinds of classroom projects that have worked for me, with the caveat that they probably should be altered for presentation at the high school level. The first is a classroom production of an edited version of a Shakespeare play. The second is a method for stimulating class discussion. The objectives of both kinds of projects is the same--to motivate the students to read and to view a play with sensitivity and critical appreciation; it is not to train actors, directors or theater critics.

In teaching students to read with sensitivity and understanding the teacher should keep in mind and should train the students to keep in mind that a play, or any literary work, can and should be read and discussed on three levels. The first is the denotative level--what is said, or what happens to whom, for what reasons, where, and when? The second is the connotative level--what is meant by what the characters say or do? The third is the evaluative level--how does the reader regard what is said or done? In evaluating what is said or done the reader might ask such questions as these: Is the

character speaking sincerely and honestly? Does the character know himself? Is the action credible? Realistic? Is the thought or language beautiful, trite, moving, etc.?

Most of us read or view a play to arrive at the third level--i.e. to make critical judgments about both the subject matter and the form of the work. But these judgments cannot be informed unless we have read well on the first two levels. Many classroom discussions become irrelevant and frustrating primarily because the students argue about matters that can be resolved by a simple reference to the text. For example, in discussing Shakespeare's Othello, it is a waste of time to argue about whether Iago has a motive for contriving the dismissal of Cassio. In the opening scene Iago tells Rodrigo that he is outraged because Othello has chosen Cassio, "a Florentine" and "an arithmetician" (1. 18) to be his lieutenant. But once the students recognize this evidence, they can proceed to the second level--what does the word "arithmetician" mean and what is the significance of Cassio's being a Florentine? Florence was the center of the cultural Renaissance in Europe, while Venice was the center of commerce. And Iago's use of the word "arithmetician" is a contemptuous reference to Cassio's theoretical military training. Iago, a racist, a Venetian, and a veteran soldier who has worked up through the ranks, therefore, would naturally have a strong antipathy to a black man's promoting a Florentine and a Venetian "arithmetician" over his head. Once these words have been understood in their context the group can then profitably proceed to the third level. They can then discuss whether such a motive justifies Iago's subsequent actions; or they can see analogies in our own society. The promotion of a military school graduate over the head of a veteran soldier by a black commander is not unlike situations that occur in the contemporary military service.

To motivate students to read the words, consider their context, and

evaluate them critically, of course, is difficult. One way I have used to achieve this objective is to stage a classroom production of an edited version of a play. In developing my method of organizing such projects, I have adapted the instructions spelled out in an excellent article, written by Morris Eaves, "The Real Thing: A Plan for Producing Shakespeare in the Classroom," College English, 31:463-72.

Although Professor Eaves details a rather ambitious project intended for use in a college classroom, I believe it could be adapted successfully at the high school level. In fact, several reasons suggest that high school students may be even more amenable to the theatrical experience than older, more inhibited college students. The younger students generally know one another better and they spend more time together. The length of the high school semester also provides more time for preparation than does the short college quarter.

The first objective is to motivate the students to undertake the project. This can be done in vaious ways depending on your own talents and style and on the attitude of your students. You may warm the students to the idea by a reading demonstration. Ask a colleague or friend to read a short scene with you for the class. Or you may ask for volunteers from the class for an extempore reading. An excellent scene for this purpose is Act I, ii of A Midsummer Night's Dream, the scene in which Peter Quince casts his characters for the performance of "The Most Lamentable Comedy and Most Cruel Death of Pyramus and Thisby." Another scene that might work is the extempore exchange between Falstaff and Prince Hall in II, iv of Henry IV, Part One.

Once the class has accepted the challenge of putting on its own performance, your role in the project is minimal. You must organize the first two or three meetings and thereafter merely serve as a resource person. First divide the class into four groups: (1) the director and actors; (2) the script

writers; (3) the production designers; and (4) the critics. The director, obviously, is the most important person in the project. He or she must coordinate the efforts of all the groups, except the critics. After explaining the function of each group to the class as a whole, you, along with the director, should meet with the groups individually to insure that each one understands its responsibilities.

The initial meeting with the actors is to read and to try out for parts. Until the script has been edited, the students should be encouraged to try various parts and to talk about their interpretations of each. After the parts have been assigned each actor should make an annotated script of his or her part. In addition the actor should be urged, or might be required, to write a biography and an analysis of the character. This exercise requires the student not only to read the text closely but also to think imaginatively about the life of the character outside of the play but only implied in the text. For example, a student playing Lady Macbeth might consider these lines: "I have given suck, and know/ How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me:" (I, vii, 54 and 55). She might ask what the lines suggest about the life of the Macbeths prior to the time of the opening of the play. It goes without saying that the actors' realization that they must read in front of a live audience encourages reading and discussing of the text on the first and second levels.

In their initial meeting, the script writers decide with the director on an arbitrary length for the production. You should warn them that the production should not exceed fifty minutes. They also decide on the general editing principle. That is, which thread of the plot is going to be drawn? To make the story coherent within an arbitrary time limitation is a much more difficult task than the script writers at first realize. They soon discover how difficult it is to cut anything from any of Shakespeare's plays, and to

cut a scene or even a line may significantly alter the meaning of the whole. To make the story coherent the writers may have to interpolate their own narrative to bridge the gaps between scenes. It may be instructive to look at the way Shakespeare himself achieves this bridging in Henry V. The script writers should meet occasionally with the actors for progress reports and to discuss the various editing possibilities.

The task of the production designers will depend largely on the talents and the enthusiasm of the individuals in the group. Some students, with artistic and/or mechanical ability may attempt rather elaborate stage and costume designs. But even if the designers are not talented or motivated enough to construct physical properties, they can at least sketch, with a written explanation, their concept of the stage and costumes. Their concept of the set and costumes, of course, must be dictated by the objectives of the director and by the constraints of the final edited text.

The critics in the class, as I presume in the society at large, are less interested and talented than the actors, writers, and designers. But their function should not be taken lightly nor should they be given the impression that they are not important. You can give various advance assignments to the critics to prepare them for their tasks. The most obvious is for them to become familiar with the play and its criticism. If resources are available, you might also suggest that they read several reviews of the play to become acquainted with the things a critic looks for in a play. The best preparation, of course, is to view a film or video tape of the play which the class will produce. You may even motivate them to read about Shakespeare's audience by assigning a book such as Marchette Chute's Shakespeare's London.

For more detailed instruction about how to prepare your students for their various functions, Morris Eaves provides an excellent bibliography in the article cited above. I can provide this bibliography for any interested

teachers. All but a few of the books in the bibliography are available for your use in the Ohio University Library.

Each time I have undertaken the organization of a classroom production, the students seemed apprehensive at first, and the prospect of success seemed dim. But in every instance the final result was better than I had hoped for. Although none of the productions were good enough to make me or the class consider going professional, they all achieved the objectives of making the students more appreciative of Shakespeare's genius. I cite just one example--the comment on a paper from one of my students last quarter: "People can tell you about how perceptive Shakespeare is and how much he understood human nature, but nothing can compare with the acting and living and, for a small amount of time, being the characters he writes about. . . . It is a new turn on to Shakespeare. It is remarkable that one man could have so much insight into human nature and blend this so well with superior knowledge of the language and expert playwriting abilities to form dramas that are still relevant today. By performing scenes from Shakespeare I have become inspired to read more, expand my knowledge, and try to learn more from others."

Another method of motivating students to read critically and to discuss the plays meaningfully is to set up a problem in which each student must take a position on a contemporary or universal issue that the play raises. This technique helps counteract some of the factors that inhibit in-depth and relevant class discussion. Many classroom discussions fail because either a few students dominate or the class as a whole goes off on a tangent. The objective, therefore, is to set up a problem which will not allow the lazy or uninterested student to cop out. One such device is to stage a courtroom trial of one of Shakespeare's characters. Iago and Brutus are particularly interesting for this purpose. The case of Brutus works well because any given class is usually fairly evenly divided about his guilt or innocence on the charge of

murder or treason. Iago is interesting because he presents a frustrating paradox to a close reader of the text. Although we all consider him responsible for the death of Desdemona, there is little evidence that could be used against him in deciding legal guilt in a court of law.

A few years ago I had a class which took to the idea of staging the trial of Iago with gusto. One student acted as judge, another as defense attorney, and a third as the prosecuting attorney. Other students filled in variously as character witnesses, bailiff, arresting officer, etc. And from the remainder of the class a jury was selected. The prosecuting attorney presented his case with fervor and diligence. He cross-examined all of the witnesses with skill and penetration, but when Iago took the stand the attorney met his match. Iago answered all the perfunctory questions with great wit and charm, but when the prosecutor came to the incriminating questions, Iago took the fifth amendment, citing the villain's closing lines of the play:

> Demand me nothing. What you know you know,
> From this time forth I never will speak word.
> V,ii, 303-304

Much to the prosecutor's chagrin, Iago was acquitted.

Almost any of Shakespeare's plays, particularly the tragedies, provides similar issues for classroom debate and discussion. Hamlet, for example, raises the question of capital punishment. The problem the class must solve is how can the Renaissance Prince, whose responsibility it is to bring justice to Denmark, solve his problem non-violently? If the class decides that he should have killed Claudius while he is praying, they are implicitly approving capital punishment. If they decide he should do nothing, they are advocating Hamlet's abdicating his responsibility as a Prince and a son of a murdered father. To arrive at an opinion about a viable non-violent solution, therefore, requires thought and a familiarity with the play.

Another contemporary issue raised by many of the plays, but particularly

Julius Caesar, is that of impeachment. The class could be divided into a senate and a house to consider whether the Senators of Rome have cause for the impeachment of Julius Caesar. This question, of course, is also related to the guilt or innocence of Brutus. The question takes on added significance if you relate it to the framing of the U.S. Constitution. That Julius Caesar was a popular play during the revolutionary period of our history and was performed at the White House for George Washington, raises the question of how the founding fathers might have regarded the characters of Caesar and Brutus.

The objectives of these exercises are two: one, the students come to see that the questions raised by the play are indeed universal and relevant; and two, they learn that one must read the plays carefully in order to argue a case persuasively. In trying to "pin a rap" on Iago, for example, it is difficult to find a place in the text where he is guilty of lying. The great irony of that play is that Desdemona dies with a lie on her lips and Iago's last words are horribly true.

As I have stated above, producing Shakespeare in the classroom or setting up discussion problems may not work for every class and for every teacher. There are numerous other ways of making Shakespeare accessible to students. Whatever our method we should remember that Shakespeare's plays were written to be played, and that they exemplify Sir Philip Sidney's dictum that a poem should teach and delight.

Ohio University, Athens

Getting Straight with Shakespeare:

The Merchant of Venice

by

Ernest H. Johansson

Few teachers who take on a Shakespeare unit assume the burden and the obligation lightly. There is an initial problem of finding time to study and assimilate the play; there are difficulties with narrative, issues and ideas, and characters, and there are practical problems of translating one's knowledge of the play into a method suitable for the unit. There are additional tasks in locating audio and visual resources and in determining how student performance in the unit is to be measured. In this brief essay, I would like first to outline a procedure and then a consideration of problems a teacher might face in developing a unit on Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice; second, I wish to venture in directions which may not be orthodox or conventional pedagogy but may at the same time point to elements crucial to an understanding of the play.

No matter how extensive or limited the resources in our schools, we all know that a unit on Shakespeare depends primarily on how well we determine what it is we wish our students to discover in the unit. And if it is true that our enthusiasms and interest in a unit will be reflected both in our approach to the work and in the potential interest of the student, we need to see that we give to the unit the best preparation in the time available. Yet to make this kind of emphasis on our own understanding of a work and its place in a unit is not to exclude intelligent use of available aides; it is rather to place the initial emphasis where both Hamlet ("the play's the thing") and Shakespeare placed it. The aids are supplementary and cannot make an effective unit if the teacher lacks a full grasp of the play.

The Merchant of Venice is studied less frequently in the schools than Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet, Macbeth, or Julius Caesar. It has the distinction

of appearing to be less important or serious than the tragedies, more serious or demanding than As You Like It or Much Ado About Nothing, not as "funny" as A Midsummer Night's Dream or A Comedy of Errors. But Merchant has much to recommend it to the classroom. It has in Shylock and Portia, striking and imposing characters; it has in the two narratives a series of unique and almost exotic actions; it has in the climactic trial scene issues and ideas about law, justice, mercy, and humaneness not without relevance to our society. And perhaps more than most comedies taught in the schools, it is a unique illustration of how and what comedy communicates to its audience.

I believe I can sssume a unit directed to middle ability juniors or seniors or possibly advanced sophomores. Most teachers, reacting to what follows, will use insight and experience to determine how they would scale up or down presentations and expectations of class and student performance in such a unit. At the same time we can say that if most people respond to Shakespeare in performance, students will respond to an effective unit on Merchant.

In developing this outline, I shall begin with some aids and methods for the teacher. Then, in an examination of the Merchant narrative, I would like to indicate how a grasp of the narrative leads to consideration of ideas and issues and how both of these in turn lead to some consideration of character. I shall limit my consideration of character to Shylock, Antonio, and Portia. My concluding remarks concern evaluation.

First the matter of the texts of the play for study and reference. If you use the classroom text for your own reading and preparation, use as a reference text the Arden Shakespeare Merchant edited by John Russell Brown (London: Metheun & Co. Ltd., 1955), available as a paperback in most college bookstores and in hardback in most community libraries. This edition has more scholarly apparatus than we may need, but the critical introduction and the notes to difficult lines make it invaluable. Should class discussion focus on how a line or a speech can be understood, this reference text can help solve a problem quickly.

Additional, extensive, or detailed studies of the play may only prove a hindrance and get in the way of one's grasp of the play.

While each of us studies a play differently and comes to an understanding of it from a different vantage, most of us would agree that knowing the narrative, significant issues, and major characters is crucial and primary. Other elements of the play -- set speeches, soliloquies, monologues, difficult passages of dialogue or basic staging -- are more easily understood once one has a grasp of narrative, issues, and character. Narrative is especially important in grasping the general design of the play; both narrative and design are essential in seeing why and how a play is a comedy (in the case of Merchant) or a tragedy.

An initial difficulty in reading a play, especially a Shakespearean play, is that, unlike a short story or a novel, what we read is actually a script for a performance. What we understand in our reading of a play is what we can imagine being performed in our minds. Thus our reading is more than grasping what the characters say, but having some sense of where they say it, who hears it, and how characters are arranged and move about the stage as they speak. And if these considerations pose problems for us, they will surely be problems for our classes. Again, the initial key to grasping the text as a script for a performance is in the dramatic narrative.

To a class, plot or dramatic narrative is merely "how it turns out." To us, however, it is the playwright's arrangement of incident and event as he feels it must be dramatized. The student understandably reads a play with some initial difficulty because he is unaware of these distinctions. We need carefully and gradually to make him aware of the special nature of what he reads, to help him, for example, keep clear what actually happens on stage and what is reported.

To achieve a clear conception of the dramatic narrative, I recommend that the teacher prepare an outline of event and incident, scene by scene, after the

major actions of the play become clear. The outline has a number of benefits. First, the review and summary clarifies and reinforces a grasp of the play; secondly, as a one-page working outline of the action, it makes evident narrative design, major movements, significant incidents. Any difficulty we have in developing such an outline will alert us to similar difficulties the student may experience. Students may develop their own outlines if time allows and if the activity has a useful context. Middle ability classes may benefit from partial outlines into which students fit missing scenes or incidents. Better classes can develop their own without assistance; slower classes can benefit from a ditto of your own outline.

The sample narrative outline below is one which a class at any ability level can use to see the main features of Merchant. We can see that the action of the play proceeds in two places, beginning in Venice and ending in Belmont--thus establishing an initial and major contrast the class can develop later. The first four scenes alternate between Venice and Belmont, followed by five scenes detailing the departure of Launcelot to Bassanio and the flight of Jessica to Lorenzo. Next, the casket scenes in Belmont alternate with scenes in Venice showing Shylock's reaction to Jessica's flight and Antonio's reported loss. Finally, the trial scene (4.1) and its aftermath in Venice (4.2) are framed by the Belmont dinner scene with Jessica and Lorenzo (3.5) and the return of the two couples and Antonio to Belmont (5.1). Seen in this manner, we (or the class) might conclude that Merchant has a narrative made up of four major movements.

Sample Narrative Outline of
The Merchant of Venice

Venice	Belmont
1. (1.1) Antonio discusses reasons for his sadness with Salerio and Solanio; does the same with Bassanio, Lorenzo, and Gratiano; alone with Bassanio, A. agrees to loan for Belmont venture.	
	2. (1.2) Portia discusses her suitors and her father's will with Nerissa.
3. (1.3) B. discusses loan with Shylock, who in aside plans revenge against A. for abuses; A agrees to loan over B's doubts.	
	4. (2.1) Portia and Nerissa meet Morocco who agrees to terms of the choice.
5. (2.2) Launcelot meets father, gets job with B. B. lets G. go with him to Belmont.	
6. (2.3) Jessica says farewell to L., sends letter with him to Lorenzo.	
7. (2.4) Lor. gets letter, plans elopement during festivity.	
8. (2.5) Shy. berates Launcelot, warns Jessica (who gets Lor.'s message from L.), and leaves for Bassanio.	
9. (2.6) Jessica elopes with Lorenzo; Antonio speeds Grat. to ship.	
	10. (2.7) Morocco chooses gold casket (carrion death).
11. (2.8) Sal and Sol report flight of lovers, reactions of Shylock.	
	12. (2.9) Aragon chooses the silver casket (idiot).
13. (3.1) Sal and Sol discusses A's failure with Shylock; Shy. hears Tubal's report and rails.	
	14. (3.2) Bassanio chooses lead casket (Portia). Grat. wins Nerissa. B. leaves for Ven. to help Antonio.
15. (3.3) Shylock has Antonio arrested; Antonio resigned.	
	16. (3.4) P. leaves Lor. in charge of Belmont, sends letter to Bellario, plans deception with Nerissa.
	17. (3.5) Launcelot jests with Lorenzo, who takes Jessica to dinner.
18. (4.1) Antonio and Shylock at trial. Shy. refuses to be merciful. Ner. with letter presents P. as Balthasar. P. reverses Shy., Ant. is merciful, Bassanio gives "Balthasar" his ring.	
19. (4.2) Por. and Ner. plan return to Belmont, plot to get Gratiano's ring.	
	20. (5.1) Lor. and Jes. meet Por. and Ner., who carry out ring joke with Bas. and Grat. Deception revealed and Ant's ships reported safe.

The chart outline helps the class understand the double and alternating narrative and its resolution in 4.1. If the students can see the Antonio--Shylock story against the Portia--Bassanio story, then it is not too difficult for them to see how Bassanio links the two narratives at the beginning of the play and Portia resolves them at the trial (4.1). Another link is evident in Jessica's flight with Lorenzo to Belmont, an action which causes Shylock to lose the distinction between his daughter's flight and Antonio's loss and to press his case against the merchant.

As the class moves through the play, it can understand how Bassanio gets Antonio into Shylock's "merry bond" (1.3) and how Portia is tied to her father's will (2.1). The five scenes dealing with Launcelot's departure and Jessica's flight are easily understood. While the casket scenes are dominated by long speeches and ceremony, they should not be obstacles if emphasis is given not to the fact of the choosing but to what the choosing represents. If a person may be defined by his acts and how he justifies them, then the reasoning of Morocco, Aragon, and Bassanio deserve attention. The scenes detailing Antonio's predicament pose no difficulty; the same is true of Portia's departure and her plan (3.4).

The most difficult scene, of course, is 4.1, the trial; it is almost a play within the play and it can be viewed as a succession of five movements: Antonio before the Duke (1-15); Shylock before the Duke (16-118); Nerissa with the letter (119-163); Portia resolving the issue (164-398); a sequence of exits (399-455). Like the casket rituals, the dispute over the interpretation of the law is clever and complicated, but the action of the reversal is not as important as the meaning of the action and the subsequent judgment made against Shylock.

Once the narrative is reviewed as far as class ability permits, one can ask the class to see why the play works the way it does--in contrast to a tragedy some students may know. It is also possible to draw parallels with television situation comedies. The question of dramatic mode is important because many students might first assume that if the play is Shakespeare's it must be a tragedy. At the same time, the class might well assume that if the play is a comedy, then it must be funny. (This second assumption is difficult to support when Launcelot's humor is the only real source of laughs in the play, except possibly for the ring episode of the last scene.) Yet we do need to bring all our resources to bear on helping the class see how Merchant works as a comedy and how it can be as serious a play as Hamlet or Julius Caesar. A brief sketch of comic plot should make clear what the class can learn from such an abstraction.

Those who prefer an extended treatment of comic plot should see Northrup Frye's "The Argument of Comedy" in English Institute Essays, 1948 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949), pp. 58-73, reprinted in Shakespeare: Modern Essays in Criticism, Revised Edition, edited by Leonard Dean (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 79-89. A comprehensive treatment of the subject is found in Frye's Anatomy of Criticism (Princeton University Press, 1957).

In comic plots, we usually find a young man who wants a young woman; he is usually opposed in this desire by a parent or an elder; a twist in the plot or a device allows him to get the girl. At the beginning of the play, the elders usually control the world or society of the play; when the young take over there is usually a moment of discovery, resolution, or recognition; at the end of the play another group is in charge of the play's world and the change is celebrated in festivity, wedding, or dance. While the elders are out of power, they are not excluded from the new society but included, though with a different status. The comic play, in effect, shows us why love and youth are good, why age and fixed ways are not, how the order of things (or

the establishment) can be changed (or beaten at its own game), and how the society restores itself or enters a new cycle.

Although the comic formula is not easy to grasp, the idea of such a process should be appealing enough to spur interest. The difficulty here is in seeing how Merchant is a comedy. The obstacles of the elders are clearly represented in Venetian law, Shylock, and the will of Portia's father. The desire of the young obviously rests with Bassanio, helped by Antonio's free loan, and Jessica, who steals her father's wealth when she elopes with Lorenzo. Jessica's fleeing theft and reports of Antonio's losses provoke Shylock's obsessive wrath. At about the same time, Bassanio meets the challenge of Portia's father when he chooses the correct casket. News of Antonio's plight, while it brings Bassanio to Venice, also prompts Portia to plan her part in the trial disguised as Balthasar. Just as Bassanio overcomes the obstacle of the will, so Portia overcomes the obstacle of Venetian law when she bests Shylock in the literal interpretation of that law.

At this point students should begin to see the idea of law emerging as an issue. Most of us have had experience with our own law or have read of recent trials, like that of Patty Hearst. Students can see that the law is many-sided, that it can work against those who use it for obsessive purposes, that the extent to which it is narrowly interpreted determines whether it is applied according to its spirit or its letter. This matter of law is a central idea in a play we define as a comedy. When this concept becomes clear to the class, it has come to understand not only a particular comedy, but also something of what comedies communicate to their audiences.

If one is successful in reaching this level of understanding, then other elements of the play can be illuminated. The actions of the central characters, their attitudes toward one another, can illustrate basic modes of human behavior and make possible considerable class discussion and debate. Thus Antonio's reported behavior toward Shylock becomes as much an issue as Shylock's pursuit

of Antonio's flesh. And the class may also come to terms with Jessica's flight and the theft of her father's wealth.

Once the elements of narrative are clear and the relationship between play and comic mode has been established, the class can move to a consideration of character, three of which I would like to consider briefly.

Few would doubt that Shylock is a difficult and complex character, larger and more powerful than others in the play. Such traits Shylock establishes in his language and his action. But, because he is an abused Jew, modern audiences, including our students, sympathize with him or see him as the hero (or anti-hero) of the play. His self-justifications (1.3.102-124; 3.1.47-66) are easily romanticized. It is true that Antonio has wronged and reviled him; but it is also true that Shylock hates Christians, prefers money before his daughter, and is indifferent to the fates of Jessica and Antonio. The text also makes emphatically clear that he has an "ancient grudge," that he vows vengeance against Antonio as his own soliloquy indicates (1.3.37-48). Even Jessica reports Shylock has plotted against Antonio (3.2.284-90). Shylock's development in the play is at worst a degeneration, from the wily lender of 1.3 to the "dog" Gratiano calls him in 4.1; at best, his development is an expanded revelation of his real character.

In a classroom, the problem with Shylock is to keep him clearly in the context of the play, responsible for his actions and speech, in order to understand the nature of his obsessions and how they dehumanize his attitude toward Christians, Jessica, and Antonio. If he is allowed to be sentimentalized or made into a kind of hero, Portia's defeat of him in 4.1 will have no meaning and Antonio's "mercy" toward him will be absurd, especially since the play shows how the obsessed Shylock is forced to come to terms with himself when he finally sees that Portia has beaten him at his own interpretation of the law. The class can certainly cite characters from television or movies who are fascinating because they are evil, yet not people we defend or justify at the

expense of our general sense of right or justice.

But if Shylock is difficult and complex because he is a comic villain whose action and language dominate the play, Antonio is no less difficult to realize. To us he is foolishly generous, naive in dealing with Shylock, and later too willing to suffer a curious martyrdom. On the other hand, he is the threatened Christian who has abused Shylock and freely admits to it--admits he would abuse Shylock again. Antonio's crisis is difficult to accept unless the class sees that something unspecified makes him sad at the beginning of the play and he is "much ado" to know himself. While the obvious reason for the sadness may be Bassanio's departure, the problem of the vaguely specified sadness may have much to do with the contrast between his attitude toward Shylock in 1.3 and his treatment of the Jew in 4.1, when Portia asks him what mercy he can render his adversary. Though the class may find Antonio's willingness to suffer and even die at the hands of Shylock unconvincing, his Christian sufferance and his mercy are part of the process through which he too comes to terms with himself. His relationship with Shylock is considerably altered in 4.1 from his attitude in 1.3; the Antonio who earlier spat and raged at Shylock in the Rialto and called him "dog" now saves from eternal damnation the adversary who has himself become more dog than human--if we can believe Gratiano.

The class should see that Shylock and Antonio each comes to terms with himself, Shylock forcibly and Antonio voluntarily, both through incidents of recognition in 4.1. Though some may argue that neither character has radically changed, neither Shylock's vengeance nor Antonio's sadness is any longer an issue in the play after the trial.

Portia does not pose the kind of problems in interpretation one finds with Shylock or Antonio. But in an age of concern for the equal rights of women in all levels and areas of society, Portia seems to anticipate the limits of female aspirations--with some disturbing qualifications. She acts and speaks as a woman confident of her beauty, wealth, and maturity; and she has clearly

enough creative intelligence to deceive her husband and confound Shylock at the same time. She is the most prominent character in the play after Shylock; she is also the most attractive. She may be contrasted with Jessica as a daughter under the control of a father: while Portia tries to fulfill the conditions of her father's will in seeking a husband, Jessica revolts against her father's domination and elopes with Lorenzo and her father's wealth. Yet, though Portia defeats Shylock, she has to do so disguised as a man. What problem Portia represents, if any, may be the absence of an intriguing flaw or obsession.

Until now my emphasis has been directed to elements of Merchant the teacher should consider, together with the general elements of the play students might find within their grasp. The specific methodology of day-to-day work in such a unit obviously varies with conditions and resources. Most teachers are able to coordinate general classwork with individual group activities, allowing students to balance common work with tasks fitted to special interests or abilities.

Yet we all face that time when classes must be graded on work within the unit. The easiest, most concrete, most convincing to parent and principal alike, is obviously the examination. But recognizing the problems of Shakespeare's language, the unusual design of his plays, the comparative uniqueness of the dramatic experience, ought to lead us to consider alternate methods of evaluating work and performance. A student's grade might be the average of his common work with the class (something each student has to do in working toward an understanding of the unit's material) and something within his own range of interests and abilities. Rather than quizzes or examinations, a teacher might pose a series of "task" questions about the play, its characters and issues--common and individual--to be completed in a notebook submitted at the conclusion of the unit, though subject to occasional or periodic (and brief) review as the unit proceeds. In this way, the student would be studying the play for understanding and not for the test; in this way the questions posed and tasks

suggested would, when completed, be directed toward the learning goals, not performance on an examination.

I realize that such an approach may not be feasible, yet I believe that the alternative approach to grading ventured here would not take much more time than one takes preparing and grading quizzes and examinations. Furthermore, viewed from the perspective of the student, the work and time committed to the unit would not depend for its grade on an examination, but on a substantial body of writing and related activities. The student would have something concrete and tangible to show for his work in the unit, even if it did not appear so to principal or parent, and the teacher would still be able to give him a grade for his work.

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Humanism as the Key to Shakespeare's Relevance

by

Frederic A. Enstrom

Shakespearean drama has been termed irrelevant, like much of classical literature, because we frequently misinterpret the word relevance. Although authors from Shakespeare's day to the present have recognized his perception of human nature, too many of us still look at his language and his settings, both of which are relatively obscure, and judge his plays irrelevant on that basis. Too few of us analyze plot, character, and theme to discover that human nature, indeed, has not changed and to conclude that human nature is always relevant. While we are not participants in Elizabethan language and settings, we are participants in greed, confusion, infidelity, and despair. We are participants in the act of being human; and as teachers and students of literature, we must have the capacity to communicate that relevance to a world that has lost its sense of history -- a world that lacks an understanding of the basic human being as he reacts to the superficial changes made through the centuries. The Victorian author, Matthew Arnold, seems to have had this idea in mind when he wrote in Discourses in America that, to maintain civilization, we must "know the best which has been thought and said in the world." Once we know the best, it follows that we must teach the best.

The first and most essential point in my commentary is the definition of the word relevant. The Oxford English Dictionary defines it as "correspondent or proportional to something." In this discussion, that "something" is human nature. Materials correspondent or proportional to human nature run parallel to it. They are not the same as human nature, but they are equal to it in impact. Thus Shakespearean drama is not the human experience, but it most definitely runs parallel to human nature.

Too frequently, however, we define relevant synonymously with familiar. We feel obligated to offer our students subjects with which they are already

familiar. We search for materials that duplicate student experiences. But these materials sometimes do not correspond to classic human nature; instead, they involve only twentieth-century settings and twentieth-century characters and twentieth-century ideas. As an example I offer one of my favorite contemporary poems, John Updike's "Ex-Basketball Player." Although Updike's poem strikes at the heart of our athletic America, I wonder if the twenty-first century will comprehend our obsession with athletics. Will they identify with the character whom Updike describes as follows?

> Flick stands tall among the idiot pumps
> . . . .
> He never learned a trade; he just sells gas,
> Checks oil, and changes flats. Once in a while,
> As a gag, he dribbles an inner tube.

I doubt if our descendants will understand such timely references because they are not reflections of timeless human nature. Neither are "the bright applauding tiers/Of Necco Wafers, Nibs, and Juju Beads" of which Updike speaks. These faces people Flick's obsessive world, but they were lost to many Caldwell High School students as recently as last Monday. If Updike's imagery did more to define classic human nature, it would be more useful to the students as human beings. If we did more than present current characters, settings, and ideas, we would be more useful to the students as human beings. If we merely reinforce current standards -- without discussing classical alternatives to them -- we are defeating the objectives of education. Those objectives are to recognize where our students' minds are and to try to develop them so that they can understand the unfamiliar. If we busy ourselves trying to duplicate student experiences, our students are restricted to them, and we can hardly consider ourselves educators.

Shakespearean drama, on the other hand, does not permit the current environment to dominate. The plays obviously do not reflect twentieth-century fads. Neither do they communicate to the majority of us the fads of the Elizabethans; their fads have been obscured by the centuries. Shakespearean drama

does not, in short, allow us to be superficial -- to involve ourselves in fads -- but instead, Shakespearean drama requires us to pierce the surface to search for the essence of the human experience. Thus, the plays become "correspondent or proportional to" human nature -- something of importance to all of us who are, ourselves, representative of human nature.

A second point to consider is other authors' appreciations of Shakespeare's relevance. It is appropriate to consider their views of Shakespeare, since we ourselves would prefer to be judged by a jury of our peers. It is also important to consider their historic viewpoints in order to understand the cultural force of Shakespearean drama. Shakespeare's contemporary, poet Ben Jonson, said of Shakespeare that "Nature herself was proud of his designs / And joyed to wear the dressing of his lines." By linking him with human nature, Jonson judged Shakespeare's works to be "not of an age, but for all time." More specifically, in Essay of Dramatic Poesy, John Dryden remarked in the latter part of the seventeenth century that Shakespeare communicated human nature "luckily." That sounds like an insult, but in reality, it is praise. Shakespeare did not need to study human nature to try to communicate it. He understood it more intuitively than the average man. His records of human nature were not falsified by objectivity but are spontaneous revelations from the pen of a practicing human. Samuel Johnson, in the eighteenth century, recognized the same quality in Shakespeare. He wrote that Shakespearean drama remains, in spite of the irrelevance of temporal allusions. Authors whose works are restricted to these fadish references are no longer known. Shakespearean drama, on the other hand, remains a series of images "correspondent or proportional to" human nature. As Sam Johnson put it in his "Preface", "Nothing can please many, and please long, but just representations of general nature." In the nineteenth century, Matthew Arnold classed Shakespearean drama among the few English works that merited status as classical literature. He did so on the basis of their representing some of "the best which has been thought and said

in the world." Thus, each century between Shakespeare's and our own times has recognized his relevance, which elicits a third phase in our analysis.

Just how is Shakespeare relevant to our professional lives in the twentieth century? While I could bombard you with many relevant details from the many plays, I am tempted instead to focus on two plays in the current Ontario season -- Midsummer Night's Dream and Hamlet. Some twentieth-century interpretations of these plays point directly to the present dilemma -- the balance of rational, sensitive, and imaginative understanding of classic human nature. John Cutts (The Shattered Glass: A Dramatic Pattern in Shakespeare's Early Plays, Wayne State University Press, 1968) sees Theseus of Midsummer Night's Dream as an unbalanced leader. Theseus abdicates his position of leadership because, like a classroom leader, he cannot successfully lead others until he understands himself. Cutts points out that Theseus recognizes the need for reason: He wishes that it would prevail to provide harmony in his kingdom, dominated by love's frenzy. Yet Theseus himself is irrational: He omits significant points in his deductions concerning his own love. For example, nowhere does he mention anything but the physical part of his relationship to Hippoloyta. From this, we can conclude that he fails to recognize that Hippolyta is merely another of his physical conquests as a manly hunter. He is, then, neither successfully rational nor successfully emotional; yet he is, like us, a leader on whom more-innocent people depend. To make matters worse, he is out-classed by the realistic Bottom, whose common sense exceeds that of the leader. Bottom, at least, is capable of recognizing that, for humans, "reason and love keep little company." (3.1) Bottom knows this much of humanity; Theseus, the leader, doesn't. He merely wishes to reduce his duties to an oversimplified, manageable form by ignoring their complexities. Thus, Theseus is simply the victim of his own midsummer night's dream, in which the physical -- not the emotional or the rational -- prevails.

As the victim of his own dream, Theseus shares the human frailties of

English teachers. We know our theory, yet have we applied it to ourselves? We know our goals to be rational ones, yet are we rational? We demand sensitivity -- genuine emotional response -- of our students as they read, but do we have it? We hope for imaginative interpretations, yet are we ourselves imaginative? We hope for classroom order, but do we sacrifice student involvement for it? Can we create a Shakespeare experience that illustrates relevance? Only if we, unlike Theseus, become involved in human nature, specifically as it pertains to our perceptions of ourselves.

Yet in a sea of "hardware" and "software", we forget the essential human problems. We fall victim to technocracy. We emphasize technical development in our discipline to make English "saleable". But more important, we side-step the true relevance -- human nature. Just try to get a kid to love his programmed reader as he sits alone with his "individualized" work! The students, realistic like the character Bottom, sometimes more successfully create the classroom experience. Unlike us and Theseus, they are not complicated by fine theory. They are simply human, trying to deal with their natures. I believe that they actually disdain the gimmickery now associated with programmed methods; yet they respond well to human problems and human approaches. Once we recognize ourselves as participants in the human comedy, we can encourage their fresh interpretations of Shakespeare.

The experience of Midsummer Night's Dream is, fortunately, comic in that Shakespeare does not provide us the destructive ending prevalent in tragedy. He reminds us, instead, that human nature, although it isn't rational, is not always deadly. Similarly, we can recognize that our errors as teachers, although they are not rational, are not deadly either. To recognize the comic in human nature provides the hope that we will all outlive our errors. It is this hope that Hamlet lacks, but nonetheless, Hamlet's personal errors are relevant to our professional ones.

Like us, Hamlet is known for his academic orientation. Like us, Hamlet

has learned his theory well. That does not, however, guarantee that he -- or we -- can practice that theory. Hamlet falls victim to so much confusion that he, in effect, destroys himself. He cannot control his reason, his emotion, or his imagination. As a result, he gives advice to the players that he himself cannot follow. He warns the players not to "saw the air", but Hamlet himself saws nothing but air: He cannot act. He warns the players not to "mouth" their speeches. He asks them to participate realistically in the subject of the play. But Hamlet has lost control of his own participation. He lacks what he asks of them; that is, he lacks "a temperance that may give it smoothness." He fails, in short, to "suit the action to the word, the word to the action."

Hamlet's inactivity is relevant to us because, like him, we are specialists in mere theory. Unless we translate theory into practice, it becomes as worthless as Hamlet's theory. The state continues to ply public school teachers with education requirements, but none of us is required to be wise to human nature -- again, the essence of teaching. Similarly, we sift through academic requirements -- Shakespearean drama among them. We mount up bibliographies and other statistics, but there is no test that guarantees understanding of the human nature represented in Shakespearean drama. Like Hamlet's players, we are asked to act our parts convincingly; yet we will never accomplish that until we direct that responsibility to ourselves alone -- until we respond empathetically to Shakespearean drama. This very simple goal is lost, however, as we become more and more inundated by educational bureaucracy and technology. We, like Hamlet, can become inundated by the rush of professional details; and we, like Hamlet, can destroy ourselves in the process. That destruction falls hardest, however, on the students and, eventually, on our civilization itself.

The Elizabethan fascination with human potential fascinates me. Their vision of man, lodged somewhere between the animals and the angels, strikes me

as unquestionably relevant. Modern trends, however, steer us away from humanism. Human nature cannot be calculated. Human nature cannot be mechanically packaged and sold. Our technocracy cannot deal with the variables of human nature, so instead, our technocracy would deny human nature in favor of expedience. Technocracy would ply us with teaching aids and, along with them, technicians' status. But our students, as humans, need the human relevance of truth and beauty present in Shakespearean drama. Aldous Huxley's Brave New World forecasts something else for us, unfortunately. Huxley's Controller says, "Our Ford himself did a great deal to shift the emphasis from truth and beauty to comfort and happiness." We, too, can be more comfortable without Shakespearean truths. We, too, can be happier in the ignorance of human problems and potentials. But without a relevant humanism like Shakespeare's, we risk becoming machines ourselves.

Caldwell High School

Some Notes on Shakespearean Acting

and

Sundry Ramblings on the State of the American Theatre

by

William Glover

Asked what it takes to act in Shakespeare, an old English character actor once replied: "Strong thighs!" True enough, it does demand enormous physical strength. There is a large element of truth to the old saying that if you can act Shakespeare, you can act anything. The "normal" performance requires concentration, emotional reality, good health, a flexible voice, etc. Shakespeare demands all of these to a super-human degree: you don't act people, you act giants. "Normal" human emotions are carried to such extremes that the actor must rise above and beyond them: laughing and crying tend to demean the text (as happened, in my opinion, with the Romeo and Juliet in Zefferelli's film)--the emotions must be there but held under an almost Brechtian control. As Peter Brook says: "the Shakespearean actor has to learn to free himself of a whole lot of mannerisms which lock him in. Having done that, he mustn't look for everything inside himself. The actor who tries, say, to bring Hamlet down to what he himself feels and understands is ridiculous." Whereas the actor in a "normal" play--kitchen-sink drama, domestic comedy etc. --appears to imitate life, the great Shakespearean actor carries his audience into the clouds--into the very mind of the poet.

A director at Stratford Connecticut once complained that there are too many words in Shakespeare--that the plot, the action, could be expressed more simply. Quite true, but the very use of the words, their multiplicity, the flow of the language as the images are built, the unbelievably beautiful poetry are the things which make Shakespeare great, not the plots (most are stolen and, as Michael Langham says, "Silly!" E.G. the coincidence of the plague and Friar John's letter in Romeo, the handkerchief in Othello--highly implausible

by to-day's standards of realism.)

Of the three Stratfords, On-Avon has the most effective actors--at the top (the middle ranks are less rich), Ontario has the most serviceable stage and perhaps the closest thing to an ensemble (I have never seen a true ensemble and have regretfully reached the conclusion after 30 years that the make-up of our society is prohibitive) and Connecticut has the worst theatre acoustically and the least sense of direction. Perhaps this is due to its proximity to New York's commercial scene. Each time the "Under New Management" sign goes up, the word "New" is a misnomer--the same mistakes are repeated, nobody seems capable of giving the place a sense of direction. Perhaps, as Peter Gill suggests, the best thing is to set a match to it and start again with a fresh vision. It's all very sad.

Which brings me to the dilemma of the American actor. Demeaned by 85% permanent unemployment in his profession; intimidated by dictatorial directors who value their own power over the creative product; abused by greedy producers, the poor American actor is on the lowest rung of the theatrical ladder. Small wonder that he shakes his fist across the Atlantic at his English and European brothers who are respected for their ultimate indispensability (viz: the artistic directors of the large English stage companies are all actors or ex-actors--Olivier, Scofield, Clements, Michel) and the function of the actor is recognized as the ultimate one vital organ of the theatrical body. Here, on the other hand, the actor is a performer, a personality, a member of the entertainment Industry. His average wage is well below the poverty level (less than $1500 per year); he takes any job he can get and, directorially, goes where he's put and acts what he's told.

His rewards, if successful, are disproportionately huge and that, together with the myth of stardom--(of the untouchable, if promiscuous, beauty)--perverts his artistic integrity. E.G. Why did Brando never return to the stage? Not even to Broadway, let alone to Oshkosk for $30 a week as his English counter-

part would have done, to recharge his batteries and practice his craft. Why? Because society would view this as "failure" and winning is all--coming in second is an unforgivable sin.

Thus the American actor, who is every bit as good as his European brother (and, in some emotional respects, superior), has relinquished his responsibility to lawyers and businessmen and autocratic directors who treat him as a puppet and the theatre as their plaything: their desire for self-agrandisement, for fame, for "best director awards", causes them to impose their concept--to leave their heavy stamp, on their productions and the price is paid by the actor, who is forced into second-hand work and the audience, who is starved of reality--the result is inevitable sterility and boredom.

How tragic it is that we have no indigenous theatre, arising from the earth and the soul of the people, as with jazz. It's all second-hand, a copy of the European Theatre, with the inevitable bastardisation. True, the musical was ours but even that has become international and we no longer exclusively excel in its execution. (E.G. American producers frequently cast English dancers because of their discipline.) It's a cliche to talk of the "death of Broadway"--the Fabulous Invalid should long since have expired under a mountain of exhorbitant production costs, "hit only" signs, ice, directorial overkill and crass commercialism but the Tits and Glitz survive--just about. But the Great Hope of the '50s, decentralisation to the regions, has not proved a saviour and the Arts Council and the Edifice Complex can't do it alone. What is needed--what is essential if the theatre is to survive in any meaningful form into the 21st century--is <u>vision</u>. Firstly, the recognition that Art is not Industry and to expect profits is ludicrous--theatre, like public transportation, should be available to all--FREE. Government subsidy is not the only answer by any means but, whereas in Sweden, Canada, Great Britain and West Germany, for example, government appropriation for the arts runs between $1.00 and $3.00 per capita, in the U.S. the figure is .7½¢! $1.00 per year from everyone in the

U.S. would provide ample funding for four branches of a National Theatre (East, Mid-West, South and North West, say). The money must be given with no strings; the artistic directors must be very carefully selected (they should not necessarily be those with a track record because so many of them have served their own careers and not the theatre); the public must be educated to come to the theatre with expectation of a celebration-with open minds, no preconceived ideas of what the theatre "should" be. They should be encouraged to respond truthfully--cease applauding out of habit and giving meaningless standing ovations out of "respect". If clapping is to mean anything when we really do appreciate the work, then we must also boo or walk out when we don't: quietly dozing off on two martinis, then waking up to applaud is self-defeating and dishonest. Also, the directors must recognise that THE RESPONSIBILITY IS ULTIMATELY THAT OF THE ACTOR AND HE, HIMSELF,MUST REMAIN ANONYMOUS. He is NOT in authority, not a representative of management with the right to hire and fire, but has a separate but equal function to be a third eye, to edit up front, to judge what will work and what won't but NEVER to impose his ideas on the actor who will only accept them second-hand. Further, theatres must have playwrights in residence and dramaturgs and new work MUST be presented at all stages of its development--new forms will emerge and be given scope and breadth. Above all, the American actor must reclaim his place in the theatre; he must take on his full responsibility with discipline and integrity--throw away fear (security is in the gut not in real estate). He may have the "right to fail" but he has the duty to labor. His is the most difficult, terrifying and inexact of the arts and needs all his courage and determination--not to compete with others but to compete with himself, to improve. Let him stop envying the British and being intimidated by the Poles: he has the physical strength, the emotional capacity and the best equipment in the world if he will take back the power from the money grabbing and the autocratic and re-establish himself upon the artistic throne. It will take more than strong thighs.

Malibu, California & Athens,Ohio

Debates to Clarify Ideas in Shakespeare

by

Barbara Roland

In place of an analysis essay for my seniors I sometimes have them organize debates to clarify ideas from the plays. For example, for HAMLET they might work out support for topics like these:

Pro: Hamlet's madness is an assumed role, part of his active search for revenge.
Con: Hamlet is so upset emotionally that he is actually mentally disturbed.

Pro: Hamlet's downfall was inevitable; he was a victim of fate.
Con: Hamlet's death results from his own choices.

Pro: Hamlet was incapable of true love for Ophelia.
Con: Hamlet's love for Ophelia contributes to the tragedy of the play.

Searching out quotes to support their arguments sends students back for a second reading of important scenes. The class as a whole then hears the results of individual and team efforts.

This project would probably be too difficult for beginning readers of Shakespeare who need much encouragement even to read the play once. For more advanced classes, however, it provides an alternative to a written essay. Similar debates can be worked out for nearly any of the plays.

Ashland High School

SHAKESPEARE: A LIST OF HELPFUL MATERIALS

I. Shakespeare's Times: Establishing a Context for the Plays

Anderson, Ruth L. ELIZABETHAN PSYCHOLOGY AND SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS. 2nd Edition. New York, 1966.
Bamborough, J.B. THE LITTLE WORLD OF MAN. London, 1952.
Burgess, Anthony. SHAKESPEARE. New York, 1970.
Harrison, G.B. INTRODUCING SHAKESPEARE. 3rd Ed. Baltimore, 1966.
Kocher, Paul. SCIENCE AND RELIGION IN ELIZABETHAN ENGLAND. San Marino, Cal., 1953.
Rowse, A.L. THE ELIZABETHANS AND AMERICA. New York, 1965.
Tillyard, E.M.W. THE ELIZABETHAN WORLD PICTURE. 1943.

II. Shakespeare's Theatres/Productions/Audiences

Chambers, E.K. THE ELIZABETHAN STAGE. 4 vols. Oxford, 1923.
Harbage, Alfred. SHAKESPEARE'S AUDIENCES. New York, 1941.
Hodges, C. Walter. THE GLOBE RESTORED. New York, 1954.
Jacquot, Jean. SHAKESPEARE EN FRANCE. Paris, 1964.
Linthicum, M.C. COSTUME IN THE DRAMA OF SHAKESPEARE AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES. London, 1963.
Nagler, A.M. SHAKESPEARE'S STAGE. Trans. Ralph Manheim. New Haven, 1958.
Smith, Irwin. SHAKESPEARE'S GLOBE PLAYHOUSE. Philadelphia, 1956. (contains scale drawings which can be used for models)
Styan, J.L. SHAKESPEARE'S STAGECRAFT. Cambridge, 1965.
Watkins, Ronald. ON PRODUCING SHAKESPEARE. New York, 1965.
Wilson, John Dover. LIFE IN SHAKESPEARE'S ENGLAND. Baltimore, 1968.

III. Shakespeare's Language

Hulme, H.M. EXPLORATIONS IN SHAKESPEARE'S LANGUAGE. New York, 1963.
Kokeritz, Helge. SHAKESPEARE'S PRONUNCIATION. New Haven, 1953.
Partridge, E. SHAKESPEARE'S BAWDY. New York, 1960.

IV. Shakespeare, The Man, The Playwright

Bentley, Gerald E. SHAKESPEARE: A BIOGRAPHICAL HANDBOOK. New Haven, 1961.
Burgess, Anthony. NOTHING LIKE THE SUN. London, 1967.
Chambers, E.K. WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: A STUDY OF FACTS AND PROBLEMS. 2 vols. Oxford, 1930.
Halliday, F.E. THE LIFE OF SHAKESPEARE. Baltimore, 1963.
Rowse, A. L. WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: A BIOGRAPHY. New York, 1965.
Schoenbaum, S. SHAKESPEARE'S LIVES. New York, 1970.

V. Shakespeare and His Sources

Bullough, Geoffrey. NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC SOURCES OF SHAKESPEARE. 7 Vols., 1970.
Muir, Kenneth. SHAKESPEARE'S SOURCES I. London, 1957.
Spencer, T.J.B. SHAKESPEARE'S PLUTARCH. Harmondsworth, 1964.
Thomson, J.A.K. SHAKESPEARE AND THE CLASSICS. New York, 1952.
Wittaker, Virgil. SHAKESPEARE'S USE OF LEARNING. San Marino. 1953.

VI. Shakespeare and Music

Hartnoll, Phyllis ed. SHAKESPEARE IN MUSIC. New York, 1964.
Long, John H. SHAKESPEARE'S USE OF MUSIC -- COMEDIES. 2 vols. Gainesville, Fla., 1967.
Naylor, Edward. SHAKESPEARE AND MUSIC. 2nd Ed. 1931.
Seng, Peter J. VOCAL SOLOS IN THE PLAYS OF SHAKESPEARE. Cambridge, Mass., 1967.
Sternfield, F.W. MUSIC IN SHAKESPEAREAN TRAGEDY. New York, 1967.

VII. Handbooks and Other Materials

Campbell, O.J., and Edward G. Quinn, eds. THE READER'S ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SHAKESPEARE. New York, 1966.
Muir, Kenneth, and S. Schoenbaum, eds. A NEW COMPANION TO SHAKESPEARE STUDIES. Cambridge, 1971.
Vandiver, Edward P., Jr. HIGHLIGHTS OF SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS. Woodbury, New York.

Marye Keslar, Zanesville

Articles Related to Teaching Shakespeare
ENGLISH JOURNAL, 1964-1970

Albert, Richard N. "An Annotated Guide to Audio-Visual Materials for Teaching Shakespeare." 54(Nov. 1965): 704-15. Lists films, filmstrips, and recordings under the headings: (1) Shakespeare's plays, (2) Shakespeare and his Age. Includes an index of producers and distributors.

French, Richard. "Student Recommendations for Teaching Shakespeare in High School." 57(Mar. 1968): 350-355. Presents the complaints of college students about their own high school exposure to Shakespeare and the ideas they have for improving instruction on Shakespeare in the high school.

Gleeson, James F. "Introducing Shakespeare." 56(Dec. 1967): 1923-94. Suggests that students write precis of a few of Shakespeare's sonnets as a preparation for the study of his dramatic works.

Helen, Sister Mary. "Living Shakespeare." 54(Jan. 1965): 48-51. Describes the organization and activities in a four-week Shakespeare festival (unit) which culminates in a school-wide drama competition. Lists plays to be studied according to grade levels.

Hook, Frank S. "So You're Going to Teach Shakespeare?" 56(Nov. 1967): 1120-26. Describes some of the kinds of things a teacher should know about the historical, intellectual, and social background to Shakespeare's works.

Mueller, Richard J. "A Groundling's Approach to Shakespeare." 53(Nov. 1964): 584-88. Presents an approach to teaching Shakespeare which initially involves students in the role of the groundlings, motivating them in their study of the play.

Nathan, Norman. "Shakespeare: 'The Play's the thing'." 56(Oct. 1967): 964-69. Identifies the ways in which plays differ from other literary works, e.g., different physical qualities, the manner of speaking lines, general concept of the production including scenery and costumes, and character interpretation.

Simmons, John S. "Shakespeare in the Boondocks." 57(Oct. 1968): 972-76. Recommends three readiness activities to help rural students before they begin a Shakespearean play, and six ways to reinforce silent reading of the play.

Veidemanis, Gladys. "Shakespeare in the High School Classroom." 53(Apr. 1964): 240-47. Lists some teaching practices that inevitably lead student's to dislike and have difficulty with Shakespeare, and discusses alternative methods and specific assignments that will help students to understand and enjoy Shakespeare.

Vogel, Alfred T. "Take This from This." 57(Dec. 1968): 1316-20. Explicates passages of MACBETH to illustrate that close textual analysis of literary works is more valuable than concentrating on the ideological and emotive aspects of a work or stressing theme and immediate response.

Wright, Louis B. "Shakespeare for Everyman." 53(Apr. 1964): 229-39. Analyzes characteristics of Shakespeare's writing that have contributed to his appeal and cites, by way of example, his popularity in early America.

Conference Summaries by Student Recorders

Editor's Note:

The following summaries of A Shakespeare Conference, held April 23-24, 1976, at Ohio University-Zanesville were written by OUZ students who acted as recorders for the sessions.

FRIDAY

The proceedings opened at one-thirty o'clock, Friday afternoon, April 23, with a welcome to the eighty-five participants from Central and Southeastern Ohio from Dr. James K. Olsen, Dean, Ohio University-Zanesville; Dr. James E. Davis, President, English Association of Ohio; and Marye Keslar, President, Southeastern Ohio Council of Teachers of English

The Man, William Shakespeare

Dr. Johansson began the first session by paying tribute to William Shakespeare on the occasion of his 412th birthday. He presented the known facts of Shakespeare's life, mentioning also the contrasting views held by Shakespearean scholars, such as whether Shakespeare was a liberal or a conservative, a Catholic or a Protestant, or straight or homosexual. These and other questions are unanswered because very few facts are known about Shakespeare's life. One predominant fact, known by all of us, is that Shakespeare created a fascinating world in his plays, a world that has the same appeal today that it had for those of his own time.

The Stratford Plays

Dr. Davis introduced the plays and speakers, thereafter turning the session over to the first speaker, Dr. Johansson.

In analyzing The Merchant of Venice, Dr. Johansson cited four different points: narrative, comic plot, characters, and major issues within the play. On the other hand, Dr. Quattrocki discussed Antony and Cleopatra as ambiguous and paradoxical, a bittersweet play using a figure of speech called oxymoron. Finally, The Tempest became a tool that Dr. Crowl used to synthesize Shakespeare's many talents and considerable genius.

These presentations furnished good background and stimulated new enthusiasm for those participants attending the conference as well as for those who will be traveling to Stratford to see the plays in production.

--Kristy Browning
--Linda Printz

The Stratford, Ontario, Productions

For the second session Friday afternoon Dr. Crowl spoke on the Stratford, Ontario, Productions. He recounted his first introduction to Shakespearean theater when, at the age of twelve on a family vacation in Canada, he attended performances of the Stratford Festival's first session. He told of his many return visits throughout the years and of the tremendous success of the theater. He explained the thrust stage, saying that the members of the audience can almost participate in the action of the play, sitting as they do around the stage. No one in the Stratford audience is more than seventy feet from the stage.

Dr. Crowl's definition of great theater is that it is a re-energizing and humanizing force. He feels that great theater involves the audience, giving them food for thought and allowing them to see more of the world. The Stratford Theater Productions would certainly seem to qualify as great theater, according to Dr. Crowl.

--Linda Schade
--Pamela Wagner

The Film

After the birthday dinner Dr. Crowl introduced the Peter Hall Production of The Midsummer Night's Dream, asking the audience to watch for the innovative qualities of the film, such as cutting from one background to another while a character was saying his lines, emphasizing the English background (which was really Greek in the play), and showing the fairies as begrimed but besparkled. The film ended the first day of the Conference.

* * * * * * * *

SATURDAY

The Saturday sessions were designed for those teaching the Shakespeare plays. Each speaker of the morning symposium made suggestions concerning new methods to pep up the old familiar plays.

Getting Straight with the Plays

How to approach the study of Shakespeare? Dr. Johansson suggested a thorough teacher preparation. The play or part of the play should be tailored to fit the classroom time and be outlined for an overall view of its construction.

Dr. Johansson said that the first reading of the play should concentrate on the story, but the second reading might be done by assigning parts and reading aloud. The class should be told where characters are on the stage, how they are arranged. Special talents should be used whenever possible -- singing, playing an instrument, etc. On measuring and evaluating the students Dr. Johansson felt it more important for students to understand the play than for them to pass a test. The test should contribute to the learning process as well as provide a grade.

--Verna Donelson

The Shakespearean Language and the Reluctant Reader

This presentation stressed useful techniques of reading to help the student understand the Shakespearean language. Dr. Crowl suggested that the first reading of any Shakespearean play be done in anticipation of the outcome of the play. No notes should be taken during this first reading. Afterward, the student may use such techniques as memorization of lines to obtain the flow of the language, studying the dialect of the low characters, and noting the imagery of animals, weather, clothing, blood, birds, etc. to become aware of Shakespeare's skill with language.

--Bobbi Young

Some Methods That Work With Julius Caesar

Joy Miller of Circleville Junior High School says that there is no one way or best way to teach any classic. The only course for the teacher to take is to help students find in the classics whatever is of relevance for them. Joy showed that a teacher needs a reserve supply of methods from which to innovate. The teacher begins by going over the main plot and introducing the characters. Thereafter, the student will have some idea of what to expect. The student cannot enjoy Shakespeare if he is bogged down by the language, so Joy uses records along with classroom reading. The records bring shape to the play when the study stretches over too many days.

While studying Julius Caesar, the class may hold a contest for the delivery of Mark Antony's speech or for the writing of a newspaper article about Caesar's murder. The teacher must be sensitive to the flagging interest of the class; any change of procedure will help. By the end of Julius Caesar the class has reviewed the life pattern of the characters. The student sees one way life works out and learns a little about how to make his own life work the way he wants it to.

--Debbie Nash

The Relevancy of Shakespeare

Fred Enstrom spoke to the conference members about the problems of relating Shakespeare's plays, written in the late aixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, to the high school student's experience. He began by stating that Shakespeare deals with human nature in all his plays, and human nature is never outdated. The high school teacher should be aware the "relevant" does not necessarily mean "that which is familiar." It is not always possible to duplicate the student's experience; instead the teacher can help the student to explore the unfamiliar, perhaps by using other's words about Shakespeare as supplementary material.

Although William Shakespeare did not need to deal with human nature in his plays, that application is what sets them apart and allows them to transcend time. Shakespeare was able, in Enstrom's words, "to pierce the surface of human nature and explore the essence of human experience." He cited themes from A Midsummer Night's Dream and Hamlet to illustrate the similarities of youth then and now.

Enstrom stressed that records and tapes are secondary; the teacher and student must get down to raw human response. In addition, the teacher must create a warm, comfortable atmosphere to elicit student response. Reason, emotion, and imagination are key words to remember when dealing with Shakespeare, and the old saying, "Give and you shall receive" is especially applicable to the high school teacher striving to bring the world of Shakespeare into the classroom.

--Terri Young

Classroom Readings and Performances

In his presentation Dr. Quattrocki brought out some of the ways for students to understand Shakespeare better through classroom readings and performances. Dr. Quattrocki believes in letting the teacher play to his own strength; in other words, if the teacher reads well, he can read to the students and explain the lines as he goes along. However, some teachers may have to resort to other methods. Dr. Quattrocki made a few suggestions about his own approach.

First, the student must read the play at least three times. The first reading is denotative: the student must know what the difficult words and allusions mean and be able to follow the plot line. The second reading is connotative; the student examines the figurative language and evaluates the play's comments on the human condition. He decides what the play means. The last reading may be done by the students aloud in class. Dr. Quattrocki said he has had some success with giving the students the opportunity to work out selected scenes and presenting those passages in class. This sets up a problem from which the student cannot "cop out." He hopes the student will take a stand on a character or on a situation.

--Kathy Goins

Shakespeare in the Boondocks

Dr. Davis gave examples of teaching Shakespeare in areas where students have no exposure to the drama except in the classroom. To cite a few cases: in upper Florida one teacher uses a model of the Shakespeare stage in the classroom; in Missouri a teacher lets students read even if they mispronounce; in a Washington D.C. black school the students are enthusiastic about using their own respective talents to rewrite or present scenes from the play; in North Carolina students each do a scene in their own adolescent slang.

The student is in the hands of the teacher who should not teach Shakespeare in a way that is too far beyond the student's grasp. Rather the teacher's goal should be to get the student to respond to the excitement and beauty of the lines. The teacher should strive to remove the language barrier and show the characters in a world of action and passion to which the student can respond personally. The teacher should stir the student to respond as deeply as he can.

--Martha Timberman

Responses and Reactions

Many reactions were given by the teacher participants who teach English in grades 7 through 12. Many teachers expressed difficulty in getting students enthusiastic about Shakespeare. The basic problem was the immature adolescent's attitudes towards the more suggestive aspects of Shakespeare's language. The speakers, with suggestions from the audience, came up with a variety of approaches. Because Shakespeare records the human condition in his plays, he does not avoid the bawdy or the obscene. The teacher has two choices: he may skip those passages or admit they are there as evidence of Shakespeare's human quality.

--Cammie Erlandson
--Alice Kieffer
--Laurie Reboulet

The Three Stratfords

Professor William Glover, director, Shakespearean actor, and presently Head of the Actor Training Program at Ohio University, was guest speaker at the Saturday luncheon held in Herrold Hall. He discussed his experiences in the theater, stressing the immense responsibilities of both performer and director in giving a good production. He emphasized that live theater is the only theater; Hollywood and television are "rubbish."

As a young man Professor Glover acted for a time in the Royal Shakespeare Company in Stratford, England. The stage there is not the Elizabethan thrust stage but rather the proscenium-arch stage with audience seated only on front. However, he praised the Stratford, England, actors as being the best in the world. He has not acted at Stratford, Connecticut, but commented that he disliked that theater with its box-like stage. He expressed great admiration for the facilities in Stratford, Ontario, where he played during the 1958 and 1959 seasons. The action can shift on a thrust stage, and wherever the action takes place, the stage is in that place.

In any production the actor, he said, must be free to interpret a part as he perceives it, and a good director will not interfere if the actor has done his homework and understands the part. Anything from the actor's gut is as good as anything from the director's head. An actor should not be cast in a part he cannot perceive clearly, and unfortunately, according to Professor Glover, miscasting has occurred from time to time in the Shakespeare theater.

In discussing good acting, Professor Glover said a great actor will take the audience into the mind of Shakespeare. He closed with the statement that he did not prefer the audience to applaud or give a standing ovation unless the audience is free to boo as well. He welcomes applause only when he feels he has given a good performance. In responding to questions from the floor, Professor Glover said that long runs are the death of the theater. A four or five week run is the best.

--Tim Arnold
--Ronald Hicks
--Sharon Ross

Continuing column by Sue Holt

Teaching English in The Middle School

This Issue: Poetry Projects

It is often difficult to teach poetry in the middle school in such a way that students will respond to and really enjoy it. Probably, like so many other things, there is an age at which a person discovers poetry, and we teachers cannot help him to appreciate it until he is ready. We must, nevertheless, begin to introduce our middle school students to the realm of poesy, and perhaps the most rewarding way to do this is through encouraging students to experiment with creating poems of their own.

It is the purpose of this column to share poetry activities which have actually been tried and enjoyed by middle school students. Of course, most projects could be adapted to elementary or high school use, but I have not tried them at these levels. All middle school teachers are encouraged to share ideas that have proved successful in the teaching and study of poetry.

Word Concentration Poems

Middle school students will enjoy creating poetry if it presents a challenge to them. The "Word Concentration" activity does this. The directions are simple: use one word as many times and as many different ways as possible in an original poem. You might choose a word for the entire class to concentrate on as one colleague did. His chosen word was "me" and following are two selections from his seventh grade class.

ME

Me is a word used in a theme.
It's used in meek and met and supreme.
It's also in men, and women, too.
Me's even in Merry Christmas to you !

Melvin uses me very meekly,
Merve makes new developments weekly.
Mendy meditates to learn what it means.
Melody mends to get in on the scene.

Me is a word often mentioned.
It's in meat and mess and other things in the kitchen.
It's found in game and came and same.
It's even a pronoun to stand for my name.

Me is a wonderful word to have around.
Just look at all its appearances I found !

It's Me

It's me who meant to be meek
When the measly old measles made me
Meddlesome and meditative at mealtime,
And medicine made me mean.

The meddlesome medico gave me
Melted medication.
He did it out of meanness.
And then came the megaphone.

The megaphone had no melody.
The mechanism was meager.
The men members of Meanness
Had had it sent to me.

The medial members of Meanness
Had sent me a sour lime.
If you measured the kindness of meanness,
It would be worth less than a dime !

If you think your students will have trouble with the assignment, ask them to select a word and then concentrate on starting each line of a poem with the word they have chosen. Here is a sample prepared according to these instructions by a student in basic English.

Buy

Buy this, buy that,
Buy a coat, buy a hat,
Buy a child a little toy,
Buy yourself some Christmas joy.

Buy some candy, buy some clocks,
Buy yourself a pair of socks,
Buy a car, buy a house,
Buy a trap and catch a mouse.

Other students might become intrigued by the thought of ending each line with the word they have chosen. "Change" was written by a student experimenting with this idea.

Change

I came home from my job and made a quick change,
Then boarded the bus, a suit to exchange,
Reached into my pocket, came out with no change,
Handed the driver a dollar, he gave me short change.
I walked off the bus and saw the light change,
Bumped into my aunt, she remarked how I'd changed,
Went into the store and made the exchange,
Then went home by taxi to relax for a change.

A final "Word Concentration" activity that students have enjoyed is to choose a common prefix and then concentrate on using words in their poem that contain that particular prefix. My favorite writing prepared in this way is "The Undervalued Undertaker" written by a ninth grader.

The Undervalued Undertaker

Mr. Underwood was the underdog of the Undertaker Society.
He was undernourished, underweight, underrated, and underpayed.
But, don't underestimate the man.
Underneath all this,
He had an understanding of the underworld,
And he had many good years
Of undertaking ahead of him.

Grover Cleveland Junior High School
Zanesville

Continuing Column by Dixon Otto

A STUDENT'S VIEW ON GENERATING WRITING

This Issue: The Cultivation of Creativity

This space will be filled each issue with a column by me on student writing. Those future columns, however, won't be for you, the teacher. They'll be aimed primarily at your students. Those articles will be seeds to pass on to your students. They must be cultivated in the classroom.

I think I should introduce myself. I'm a student of writing. For the record, I'm a senior Journalism major at Ohio University. During my few years behind a typewriter I've tried about every type of writing: short stories, poetry, essays, humor and journalism. Playwriting is about the only thing I haven't tried yet.

I spend a considerable amount of time looking back at how I developed as a writer and how I was and was not helped by English teachers. I'm very critical of the backwards way writing and English are taught.

Traditionally, grammar, vocabulary, etc. are taught in isolated little compartments. Then the student is expected to combine what he has learned by writing an essay on his typically boring summer vacation. You cannot put grammar and vocabulary together and come up with good writing, writing that will interest the student. Students must be taught how to discover their own creativity. Later columns will have suggestions as to how to spark creativity.

I called the teaching of English backwards. Student's creativity should be cultivated BEFORE they study style and grammar in depth.

EVERY student can create a unique, good piece of writing. His creativity can break seed even without a knowledge of grammar, for example. If the student sees that what he has written is good, he becomes interested in English. Then the time has come for the teacher to cultivate the student's creativity. That interest can be turned into an interest in grammar. Show the student how his good creativity can be turned into better writing by better grammar and mechanics. He is much more likely to be interested in how a clause works in his sentences than in some isolated one thrown out at him.

In my own case, I couldn't have cared less about grammar until I went to college. Then I saw that if I wanted to use any talent I had, I NEEDED skills like grammar. Now I'm scrambling to upgrade my verbal skills. How much easier I would have had it if years ago some teacher had recognized my creativity and worked from there to show me how grammar could improve it. Instead, grammar was thrown out in isolated, abstract cubes to be digested. It wasn't very tasty.

How many students would benefit and gain an interest in the mechanics of writing if creativity were emphasized? Creativity isn't limited to a few. All can enjoy writing. My ideas on the ways to cultivate creativity will be presented in future columns. The main point is to watch for signs of creativity and originality. Reward them. You'll be surprised at the strange places creativity comes from.

Ohio University, Athens

May 5, 1976

Dear Fellow Members of SOCTE:

This July, from the 19th to the 23rd, the English Department at Ohio University in conjunction with the Ohio Program in the Humanities will sponsor the following conference--The United States Constitution: A Bicentennial Inquiry into its Humanistic Roots and its Influence on the American Character. This is the fourth year in a row that such conferences, examining an important public issue or document from the perspective of the humanities, have been held on the Athens campus and we are most anxious to attract an interested and spirited group of fellow citizens to join our discussions. As the tentative schedule (see reverse side of this page) indicates, we will be reading and discussing a variety of humanistic texts ranging from Aristotle's Politics, to Shakespeare's Julius Caesar, to Twain's Huckleberry Finn to determine what illumination they contribute to an understanding of the political and cultural climate which produced the Constitution and the development of the American character in the intervening two hundred years. Through the generousity of the Ohio Program in the Humanities it is possible for us to provide participants with texts and a modest stipend to cover the cost of room and board, but these funds are limited and are distributed on a first-come, first-served basis so we would appreciate your filling out the advance registration form found on the enclosed brochure and mailing it to us as soon as possible.

We have found the past three conferences to be both educationally exciting and richly pleasureable and we would be most pleased to have you join with us in this year's program.

Sincerely yours,

Edward Quattrocki
Associate Professor of English
Conference Director

CONFERENCE ON THE CONSTITUTION: SCHEDULE

Sunday, July 18

4:00 - 8:00 p.m. Registration and Reception: Quattrocki Residence, 24 Fairview, Athens

Monday, July 19

9:00 a.m. Welcome: Charles Ping, President, Ohio University

9:15 a.m. Introduction: Ed Quattrocki, Director of the Conference

9:30 a.m. Politics, Book I, Aristotle; Moderator, Robert Coogan, Associate Professor of English, University of Maryland.

1:30 p.m. The Spirit of the Laws, Montesquieu; Moderator, Alvin Denman, Associate Professor of Philosophy and Religion, Antioch College.

8:00 p.m. "The Founding Documents: The Declaration of Independence, The Articles of Confederation, The Federalist Papers, and the U.S. Constitution", Lecturer, George Anastaplo, Professor of Political Science, Rosary College and Lecturer in the Liberal Arts, University of Chicago.

Tuesday, July 20

9:00 a.m. Julius Caesar, Shakespeare; Moderator, Sam Crowl, Associate Professor of English, Ohio University.

1:30 p.m. "The Gettysburg Address", "The Second Inaugural Address", "The Perpetuation of Our Political Institutions", Lincoln; Moderator, Laurence Berns, Tutor, St. John's College.

8:00 p.m. "The U.S. Constitution and its Humanistic Significance," a televised panel discussion featuring: George Anastaplo, moderated by Ed Quattrocki, Associate Professor of English, Ohio University with Laurence Berns, James Barnes, Associate Professor of Government and Dean, Center for Afro-American Studies, Ohio University, and Harrison Sheppard, Director of the San Francisco Office of the Federal Trade Commission.

Wednesday, July 21

9:00 a.m. Second Treatise on Civil Government, Locke; Moderator, Yates Hafner, Dean of Monteith College and Professor of Literature, Wayne State University.

1:30 p.m. Benjamin Banneker's Letter to Thomas Jefferson; Moderator, Cosmo Pieterse, Associate Professor of English and Black Studies, Ohio University.

8:00 p.m. "Violence and the American Character in the Works of Joyce Carol Oates," a televised panel discussion featuring Carol Harter, Associate Professor of English and Ombudsman, Ohio University, moderated by Sam Crowl with James Cox, Avalon Professor of American Literature, Dartmouth College, and Cosmo Pieterse.

Thursday, July 22

9:00 a.m. Huckleberry Finn, Mark Twain; Moderator, James Cox.

1:30 p.m. Up From Slavery, Booker T. Washington, and Souls of Black Folks, W.B. DuBois; Moderator, Louis Greenstein, Associate Professor of History and Assistant Dean of Moravian College.

8:00 p.m. Oral interpretation of selected readings from the Conference by James Earl Jones. (tentative)

Friday, July 23

9:00 a.m. deToqueville's Democracy in America; Moderator, Harrison Sheppard, Assistant Director, San Francisco Office of the Federal Trade Commission.

11:30 a.m. Summary and Evaluation.

Plan Now for the Fall Conference
of
The Southeastern Ohio Council of Teachers of English

Saturday, September 18, 1976
at
Chillicothe High School, Chillicothe, Ohio

A TIME TO SPEAK

If you agree that we should place more emphasis on the spoken word at all levels, plan to attend our conference.

If you would like to share ideas and methods with other professionals from southeastern Ohio, do join us.

If you have questions to ask, you'll surely get some helpful answers.

If you enjoy good company, you'll have a happy day.

and

Remember! If we speak out about our concerns, someone just might be listening!

Look for material for registration for the conference and membership renewal in August.

Please alert other teachers in your area who might be interested in the conference and in becoming members of SOCTE.

(If you have questions or suggestions about the conference, please write to Martha Cottrill, 151 West Fifth Street, Chillicothe, Ohio 45601.)

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Dogwood, Daffodils, and Dandelions:
A Spring Conference on the Practice of Writing

The Noble County hills practice growth perennially. Some people do, too: They are teachers and writers. If you blossom in poetry, fiction, drama, exposition, or journalism -- either as a student of writing or a teacher of writing -- we have a place for you at the Spring 1977 SOCTE Conference. We plan seminars in all forms of writing. We request displays of student publications from all participants. We anticipate readings of original works and discussions on the teaching of writing to students of all ages. We hope you'll be there!

Caldwell, Ohio, High School
Saturday, April 23, 1977

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OFFICERS FOR 1976-77

(Elected April 24, terms to begin after Fall Conference, September 18, 1976)

President--June Berkley
Vice President--Martha Cottrill
Secretary--Mary Frost
Treasurer--Luther Tracy

IN MEMORIAM

F. Anthony DeJovine, Professor of English at Ohio University since 1970, died March 22, 1976. Tony served on the Executive Committee of the English Association of Ohio in several capacities. He was chairman of a state committee on the preparation of English teachers in 1969, served as Associate Editor of The Ohio English Bulletin for one year, was at-large representative, and appeared on state convention programs frequently.

In the Southeastern Ohio Region Tony will be remembered as one of the founders of The Southeastern Ohio Council of Teachers of English. He served as advisor, editor, workshop conductor, speaker, and all-round encourager. He never missed a meeting of the organization or its Executive Committee.

His loss will be felt not only by his colleagues and students, but by English teachers throughout the state. A scholarship fund has been set up in his memory to help future English undergraduates. Checks may be made out to The Ohio University Fund and earmarked for the F. Anthony DeJovine Memorial Scholarship, Ohio University, Athens, Ohio 45701.